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Hafa Adai!

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IPI admits violations, ready for suspension

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

» CCC executive director asks tribunal to slap IPI with suspension, $5M fines
» Ernest says harsh truth is IPI has no respect for commissioners

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC entered into an agreement with Commonwealth Casino Commission executive director Andrew Yeom yesterday that basically admitted it violated many CCC orders as alleged in Yeom's three consolidated complaints against IPI.

CCC board chair Edward C. Deleon Guerrero, who presided over the tribunal hearing yesterday, directed IPI and Yeom to file separately proposed global orders outlining the fine and penalties to be im-

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AS RECEIVERSHIP LOOMS

IPI ordered to provide list of assets

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona has ordered Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC to prepare and provide a complete list of its assets no later than 5pm today, March 3.

Along with its assets, Manglona ordered IPI to provide all relevant payroll information and sup-

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CNMI now has 144 positive cases

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

More than a week after the CNMI saw its highest number of single-day recorded cases of COVID-19, one more incoming traveler has been confirmed positive for COVID-19, raising the total num-

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AT A GLANCE

As of 8pm, March 2, 2021

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,735	7	7,742
Recovered	7,564	16	7,580
Active	24	7	31
Deaths	131	0	131
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			128,284

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	143	1	144
Traced via Travel Screening	117	1	118
Traced via Community Screening	26	0	26
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			26,131*
Days since last community transmission			196

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Saipan:	Tinian:	Rota:
Dose 1: 9,791	Dose 1: 523	Dose 1: 745
Dose 2: 7,432	Dose 2: 137	Dose 2: 258

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, fourth from right, and TanHoldings president and CEO Jerry Tan, third from right, are joined by CNMI and private sector leaders at the groundbreaking ceremony of Crowne Plaza (formerly Fiesta Resort & Spa) in Garapan. BEA CABRERA

Crowne Plaza Resort breaks ground

By BEA CABRERA
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CORRESPONDENT

The much-awaited groundbreaking for Crowne Plaza Resort was held yesterday at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan, about 10 months after TanHoldings CEO Jerry Tan first announced that the company has inked a contract with InterContinental Hotel Group to manage the Garapan property.

Fiesta Resort & Spa's metamorphosis to Crowne Plaza Resort is expected to be completed by 2022, giving the CNMI another international hotel brand.

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COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- Orange
- Yellow
- Blue
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

INSIDE

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India is expanding its coronavirus vaccination drive beyond health care and frontline workers.
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SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

CCC board orders mandatory vaccination for employees

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The Commonwealth Casino Commission board has authorized CCC executive director Andrew Yeom to require all their employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 and provide proof of vaccination.

CCC chair Edward C. Deleon Guerrero signed the order last Wednesday shortly after their board meeting.

The board concurred that Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' mandatory policy adopted for the Executive Branch employees is sound and should apply to the CCC as well.

Deleon Guerrero

The commission has 41 full-time employees, including its legal counsel, assistant attorney general Michael Ernest.

Torres has made it mandatory for all employees of the Executive Branch to receive be vaccinated, citing the need to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to facilitate a healthy and safe work environment. In his directive last Feb. 18, Torres said this policy applies also to semi-autonomous agencies and entities, but not to other branches of government and autonomous agencies and entities.

The governor, however, encouraged other branches of government and autonomous agencies and entities, including the Commonwealth Ports Authority and the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. to respond, likewise, to the present situation.

See CCC on Page 4

DCRM
SUMMER
INTERNSHIP
COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
The Division of Coastal Resources Management is looking for 15 CNMI-based college students or college-bound high school graduates with an interest in learning more about coral reef and coastal zone management. Our summer interns work 20 hours a week for 10 weeks from June to August and are paid $10.00 per hour.
To be considered, please submit the following documents by email to outreach@dcrm.gov.mp
CNMI EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION
Which can be found at www.cnmiopm.net
COVER LETTER
RESUME/CV
TRANSCRIPTS
Official or Unofficial
TWO (2) LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION
Instructors and/or Employers Only
POLICE CLEARANCE
Within the Last 3 Months
COPY OF VALID PHOTO ID
Driver's License, Passport, etc.
APPLY BY FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2021
This summer's internship opportunities include:
MARINE MONITORING ◦ EDUCATION & OUTREACH
SHORELINE MONITORING ◦ SPECIAL AREA MANAGEMENT ◦ REGULATORY COMPLIANCE
WILDLIFE CONSERVATION ◦ WATERSHED MANAGEMENT
For more information, contact DCRM at
664-8300 or visit our website at WWW.DCRM.GOV.MP
CORAL REEF

28 equal opportunity champs honored

By NEIL FAMA
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REPORTER

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres proclaimed March 2021 as Developmental Disabilities Month yesterday afternoon with the theme "Disable the Label" at the Governor's Office on Capital Hill.

Separately, the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities held an award ceremony at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan's Hibiscus Hall yesterday to recognize what it calls the 2021 "Champions of Equal Opportunity." In all, UCEDD recognized 28 advocates under different categories.

"This year, after overcoming many challenges such as COVID-19, the council and its partners would like to celebrate some outstanding individuals who truly embody what advocacy is all about. Today we honor the community members who dedicate their lives to helping and improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities," said Pamela C. Sablan, executive director of the CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities.

One of the awardees, Ronnie Calvo and his wife Lora Calvo, were presented with the Rota Family Advocate of the Year award.

Speaking later with *Saipan Tribune,* Ronnie Calvo, who said he himself is a parent of a child with a disability, said, "We should all recognize an individual's ability and grant equal access because we are all equal. …The theme 'Disable the Label' is very important, and can help change the mindset of our society."

UCEDD director Jennifer-Eilleen Castro also discussed the importance of this year's theme "Disable the Label," highlighting the importance of disabling the stereotypes that are often associated with people who have disabilities.

In her example, Castro said a person with autism may say, "Just because I have autism doesn't automatically presume that you are better at math than I am. Just because I'm a female doesn't mean you are better at planning than I am. I'm not a girl, I'm not a boy, I'm a human being."

First lady Diann T. Torres, who gave welcoming remarks at the event, said, "Each and every one of us here have our strengths and weaknesses, and I stand by the slogan 'Disable the Label,' because in today's society, we are all fighting for equal opportunity."

The ceremony was led by master of ceremony Susan Satur, executive director of the Center for Living Independently in the CNMI and CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities board member.

Gaming panel sets oversight on IPI's compliance failures

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The House of Representatives Committee on Gaming, chaired by Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan), agreed yesterday to hold a legislative oversight hearing to look on the governance, financial suitability, and compliance failures of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC.

After citing the many problems and issues involving IPI, committee vice chair Christina E. Sablan (D-Saipan) moved to hold a legislative oversight hearing.

"Legislative oversight is critical at this juncture, and long overdue," Sablan said.

All committee members agreed.

Sablan told reporters after the meeting that after six years since the casino project first started in the Commonwealth, there's a long history of compliance failures, there are questions about corporate governance, who's actually in charge of the company, and who actually makes decisions.

She said there's a litany of lawsuits and failures to pay a license fee and regulatory fee.

"The list goes on and on," she said.

Now the Legislature is being asked to consider changes to the law and the Commonwealth Casino Commission is being asked to consider changes to the license.

"Is this a legitimate business? And if it's not a legitimate business given this long history of violations that I described earlier in my statement, then why would we continue to accommodate the company and how do we move forward to uphold our laws, disentangle ourselves from all these mess and move forward as a Commonwealth?" she asked.

Sablan said they already have a list of initial witnesses that they's like to call and a list of documents to start with.

IPI now looking at repatriating Mongolian workers

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI), LLC will soon be able to repatriate their Mongolian construction workers, depending on the status of their CNMI-Only Transitional Worker visas.

In the seventh status report to the U.S. District Court for the NMI, IPI counsel Michael W. Dotts said that IPI learned that it will soon be possible to send their Mongolian construction workers home. However, these workers, who entered the CNMI on H2-B visas, have applied to convert their visa status to CW-1, but Dotts said that this wasn't guaranteed and that they are still awaiting approval from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

It was learned that there still are a total of 106 Mongolians working for the exclusive casino licensee.

IPI should know the status of the Mongolian wiorkers' CW visa applications by the end of this week or early next week, according to Dotts. Should the visas be denied, Dotts said that IPI will then work on sending them home.

As for the construction work at the Imperial Pacific Resort in Garapan, that remains suspended.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, IPI has already repatriated four Thai construction workers. Other workers, however, have refused to leave the island until they are paid their back wages, while others are looking at changing their immigration status and travel restrictions in some places have yet to be lifted.

Of the six Malaysians remaining, one has applied to renew his CW visa status with IPI, and the other five do not want to depart until they are fully paid, Dotts said.

As for the Taiwanese workers, 11 have applied to change their status from H-2B to CW with a different employer.

The 11 Turkish employees who decided not to depart last week still remain on island, and two of the group's members strongly refused repatriation.

Interior applauds launch of Island Leaders Speaker Series

Chief Judge Ramona Manglona of the U.S. District Court for the NMI recently joined four island leaders who addressed participants and alumni of the Executive Leadership Development Program for the inaugural "Leadership in Action" Speaker Series, a U.S. Department of the Interior program.

All five speakers—former Palau president Thomas Remengesau Jr., former Federated States of Micronesia Congress speaker Bethwel Henry, Guam Gov. Lourdes Leon Guerrero; Marshall Islands Ambassador to the United States Gerald Zackios, and Manglona—gave over 150 ELDP participants and program alumni a unique opportunity to engage in the application of island leadership principles as they relate to political, cultural, historical, and economic issues, as well as emerging trends and topics that shape and affect island communities.

"The leaders in this inaugural series have important leadership skills and experience not only in the islands but internationally. The Speaker Series provides a unique and important opportunity for ELDP participants to engage and hear from leaders who already have extensive leadership experience and knowledge," said OIA director and acting assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs Nik Pula. "We also note that [Bethwel Henry] has passed away since participating in this program and we honor his memory."

■ **President Thomas Remengesau, Jr.,** served as the inaugural speaker. His opening remarks discussed tenets of leadership that have shaped his public service career, Palau's role as a leading global voice in a strong commitment to conservation, and an unwavering commitment to core values in Palau's long-term diplomatic approach. Remengesau remarked that leadership begins and ends with values that will serve as a foundation and influence every single decision a leader must make.

■ **Speaker Bethwel Henry** delivered remarks highlighting the era when island leaders in the Congress of Micronesia were discussing and exploring options for local self-governance during the during the late 1960s and 1970s in the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Henry suggested that no man is an island and recommended getting to know others, encouraging teamwork, unity, and working together to solve problems.

■ **Gov. Lourdes Leon Guerrero** shared her personal and professional journey both from the private and public sector perspective. Her experience as a nurse and the chief executive officer and president of Bank of Guam helped form her unwavering commitment to address controversial social issues and to ensure equity for all. She suggested that progress, advances, development, growth, and change for the better cannot happen without challenging the norm, taking a risk, engaging in productive debate, or mustering the courage to speak out.

■ **Chief Judge Ramona Manglona**, the first woman Federal District Court Judge for the Northern Mariana Islands, highlighted the importance of personal values and shared life lessons learned over the course of her career as the CNMI attorney general and as a federal judge. She suggested that hard work and values, hand in hand with faith and family, are critical to success.

■ **Ambassador Gerald Zackios**, speaking immediately after the Pacific Island Forum's leadership selection meeting, wherein he missed, by one vote, the opportunity to be the next secretary-general, spoke on the importance of courage and resilience. Zackios conveyed a message on the importance of not allowing disappointment to prevent you from bypassing opportunities.

Rev. Francis X. Hezel, SJ., a leading expert in Micronesia and former director of the Micronesian Seminar, served as a moderator for the ELDP Leadership in Action Speaker Series and facilitated engaging and productive discussions. It is expected that the Speaker series will continue through 2021 with the hosting of additional prominent leaders.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs provides funding support for the ELDP, which is administered by the Graduate School USA's Pacific & Virgin Islands Training Initiatives. First implemented in 2008, the ELDP serves as the premier leadership development program for government employees throughout the U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands and in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Additional information about the ELDP is available online at http://eldp.pitiviti.org. ***(PR)***

IPI

From Page 1

posed on IPI.

Assistant attorney general Michael Ernest, counsel for Yeom, asked the board to suspend IPI's gaming license and be fined a total of $5 million.

The five complaints against IPI are its failure to pay the $3.1 million annual regulatory fee last Oct. 1; failure to comply with a CCC order directing IPI to settle amounts owed its vendors; failing to comply with the minimum capital requirements of CCC's order, among other issues; failing to pay the $15.5 million annual casino license fee by Aug. 12; and failing to contribute $40 million in community benefit fund money in 2018 and 2019 as required by the Casino License Agreement.

Ernest pointed out that nothing needs to be tried anymore at the hearing since both parties—CCC and IPI—have agreed to the facts of the case. Ernest asked that IPI be found guilty as charged in the second consolidated case involving three complaints. He asked the board to issue an order declaring that the claims in the three complaints have factual and legal basis and have been proven beyond a preponderance of evidence and reasonable doubt.

"We're asking for a license suspension of indeterminate amount until they fully comply with the orders that they have violated," he said.

Ernest said the maximum possible total fine is $808 million, but Yeom is asking the tribunal to order IPI to pay a lump sum of $1.5 million in the third case, $2 million in the fourth case, and $1.5 million in the fifth case, for a grand total of $5 million.

Ernest said that after hearing IPI counsel Tiberius Mocanu's statement and considering what he said and listening to the commissioners' questions, Yeom's position is that the commission probably could revoke IPI's gaming license right now if it wanted to. "I believe there's regulatory authority for it. But having said that, I agree with counsel for IPI that it would not be appropriate at this time," Ernest said, adding that Yeom, in fact, doesn't believe that revocation is proper in all of his five complaints against IPI. "I don't believe his opinion has changed," said Ernest, adding that the complaints don't mention revocation directly, but only talked about suspension and penalties.

Ernest said IPI should be put on notice that it could lose its license but also giving IPI ample time to correct its actions. "We should be screaming from the tree tops, 'We're going to revoke your license, we're going revoke your license.' The good news is I think they're hearing that message right now," he said.

Ernest said IPI now can't say that they don't have notice going forward. "But I think it would be very arguable that they didn't have proper notice should that (revocation) occur as a result of today's hearing," he said.

In place of revocation, Ernest said, is increasing the fine against IPI. He said pumping up the fine is basically a *de facto* revocation anyway, because IPI is "financially unsuitable." Ernest said that giving IPI a $20-million fine will be similar to a revocation since IPI will never be able to pay it.

"Again, it is up to the commission, whatever you want to happen can happen. [But the] executive director does not seek revocation. [The] executive director seeks suspension until they [IPI] comply," he added.

As for monetary sanctions, if any, Ernest said the grand total of all of the violations is 16,165 violations, and at $50,000 per violation, that brings the possible maximum fine to a total of $808,250,000. However, he said, Yeom does not request that amount and does not expect the tribunal to impose that. Instead, he said, Yeom seeks the imposition of a fine that—in the commission's judgment—will impress upon IPI that it has to take the CNMI's laws and the CCC's regulations seriously.

"We're asking for the commission to impose a penalty that impresses upon IPI the need to start following the Commonwealth law and to start respecting the CCC," he said, adding that the difficult truth about the matter is that the evidence shows that IPI has absolutely zero respect for the commission. "I hate to say it, it gives me no pleasure to say it, but I have to say it," he said. Ernest said if IPI respected the commission, it would have done the bare minimum.

Mocanu said the argument for suspension and not revocation appears to show a desire for IPI to succeed and come back from this situation and do well. "That's not to say that fines or an imposition of sentence by this tribunal isn't necessary to assure that to create a structure for that success. But it should not be one that is punitive," Mocanu said.

He said that, as Ernest described, it should not be one that carries $808-million burden, but should be one that creates a system through which IPI has the ability to regroup and begin to come on board with its payments and be squarely under the law and the regulations of the commission as it tries to regain its gaming license.

"It has to be given some breathing room, and it has to be able to execute a plan that's reasonable and sets them up for success,"Mocanu said.

He added that that they're asking that the commission hold IPI accountable, but with the understanding of the economic crisis that it's faced with and its ability to incrementally make progress.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

CROWNE

From Page 1

Speaking in front of elected officials, government employees and business people present in the ceremony, Tan said the first phase of the project was initially estimated to cost $25 million. "…But the latest update is we are actually going to spend $38 million. …When you talk about hotel investment…$25 million…$30 million, that's a lot of money and you would want to be able to recover quickly. So if you want to go into the hotel business like the Tan family, it is a long term investment, which shows that our commitment in the CNMI is a long-term commitment," he said.

"...Then COVID-19 happened… but this does not discourage us because we know that the hotel business is a long-term investment and we are in business in the CNMI for the long run and this is our home, this is where I live, I am the Tan family representative in the region and we are not going anywhere.. so whether it is COVID-19 or not, our commitment continues," he added.

Tan announced in May last year that the company had inked a contract with InterContinental Hotel Group to manage the Fiesta Resort & Spa in Garapan. Yesterday's event came almost a year after, signifying the first day of renovation and construction and solidifies the commitment of the Tan family to put into action their vision for the CNMI.

According to Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, this management contract that TanHoldings has inked with IHG is a lifetime investment, considering that its new lease is for 40 years. "…This is important for all of us…not just for those who are here but also for those people outside looking in that, while the rest of the world is on a downtime, the Tan family and the CNMI continue to move forward," he said.

Thomas Mayrhofer, regional general manager of Fiesta Resort Guam, expressed gratitude to the Tan family for choosing IHG and its Crowne Plaza to rebrand the Fiesta property and remake it into a world-class hotel in the CNMI. "Today, there are 429 Crowne Plaza Hotels operating worldwide. … In Paris, Hamburg, Sydney, everywhere in the world there is a Crowne Plaza and we are so excited to be the first Crowne Plaza in the Pacific, which will probably open in August or September of this year and we are absolutely delighted," he said.

"The Tan family has just been absolutely stellar, they have supported us all the way and…there are many hotel projects that have slowed down but not Saipan, not the CNMI and not the Tan family, because we continue to move forward and this is truly the vision," he added.

Jens Von Gierke, principal and founder of Wave Hospitality Advisors Inc., that is leading this renovation project, said it took them two years to get to this point and start this endeavor. "…We established the scope, selected a project team, and it took a while…to figure out how to make this place a truly world-class hotel with the IHG brand on it. Our project is really the best of both worlds, international design and project management paired with local expertise," he said.

The overall concept for the project means all-new designs in the guest rooms, an all-new lobby, reception, a sports bar indoors and outside, and upgrade the other areas. "…The outdoor will have a new pool experience, new pool infrastructure… new air-conditioning and RO system," he added.

Tan said he and the rest of his family believe in this destination. "I live here so I know how beautiful the CNMI is. …That's why we believe in transforming the CNMI into a world-class destination. We have what it takes and we know we are going to be a part of developing that potential , we want to see the entire hotel industry improve the product and we are doing our part and this is something that we are excited about. We want to help elevate and improve this destination."

ASSETS

From Page 1

porting documents involving back wages owed after the 2019 consent judgement that totals approximately $600,000.

IPI was also ordered to remit $1,182,793 owed in back wages to the USDOL under the 2019 consent judgment and was ordered to deposit $800,000 into an escrow (trusted) account to secure the future payment of wages for IPI by March 1.

If IPI does not comply with the order, Manglona said that the court will proceed with the appointment of a receiver to begin liquidating IPI's assets to fulfill payment of the 2019 consent judgment.

IPI counsel Michael Dotts earlier said IPI would not be able to pay the $600,000 that is owed after the entry of the 2019 consent judgement to workers who have already been sent home.

Dotts raised a concern regarding the legal issue of the CNMI's tax lien on its CNMI assets that could potentially require more liquidation than they originally contemplated.

Not only does IPI have to provide a list of assets, Manglona said that all parties—IPI, USDOL, and IPI's parent company, Imperial Pacific International Holdings, Ltd.—have until 3pm today to submit any and all objections for Tang's nomination as receiver.

In the same order, Juan Lizama, IPIH chair Cui Li Jie's counsel, said that Cui would not object to Tang's nomination as the receiver but they were still given until 3pm on March 3 to submit any objections.

Tang must also submit her amendments, if any, to USDOL acting secretary Milton Al Stewart's proposed terms of receivership no later than 5pm on March 3.

Manglona said that the court acknowledged that there are potential expansions of the amount that is owed, as well as potential conflict of interests in the nomination of Tang.

CNMI

From Page 1

ber of cases in the CNMI to 144.

According to the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., the individual was identified by travel screening and confirmed diagnosis through fifth day testing and was escorted safely to quarantine and was moved to the designated isolation area at the Kanoa Resort Alternative Care Site for close monitoring.

CHCC has already initiated contact tracing for the most immediate contacts of the new confirmed case, including passengers on the same flight.

Out of the 144 total COVID-19 cases, CHCC said 118 were identified by travel screening while 26 were local transmissions. Of the 118 identified by travel screening, 73 are from the U.S. mainland, 32 from a U.S. territory, and 13 from a foreign country. There is currently one person in isolation and the CNMI has had no local transmission in the past 196 days.

As of March 2, 7,827 individuals have finished their COVID-19 vaccination series, while 11,059 individuals have at least gotten their first COVID-19 vaccine shot.

In neighboring Guam, the U.S. territory's Joint Information Center reported that five new cases of COVID-19 were identified out of 1,412 tests performed by the Department of Public Health and Social Services last Monday, March 1, and tests from additional labs from Friday, Feb. 26 to Monday, March 1. Three cases reported recent travel history and were identified in quarantine.

To date, there have been a total of 7,742 officially reported cases of COVID-19 in Guam with 131 deaths, 31 cases in active isolation, and 7,580 not in active isolation.

CCC

From Page 2

Deleon Guerrero said that, as an autonomous agency exempt from the governor's directive, CCC has considered the basis for and scope of the directive, and concurs with the policy.

He said it is the policy of CCC that no employee shall pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others in the workplace.

Deleon Guerrero ordered Yeom to take steps to ensure that all CCC employees either complete the COVID-19 vaccination program or obtain an approved exemption accommodation, and directed Yeom to report to the board the percentage of employees who have completed the vaccination program.

The chairman ordered Yeom to require employees who complete the vaccination program to provide him (Yeom) written documentation provided by the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., or other medical provider authorized to administer the vaccine that verifies their receipt of the required doses of the vaccination.

He said failure to provide this documentation may be grounds for adverse personnel action.

Deleon Guerrero said Yeom shall grant a request by an employee for a medical exemption accommodation where the employee provides information from the health care provider that the he/she has a condition that makes it unsafe to receive any or all of the COVID-19 vaccines.

He said the executive director shall grant a request by an employee for a religious exemption accommodation where the employee demonstrates he/she cannot receive the vaccination due to a sincerely held religious belief or practice.

Deleon Guerrero said if no reasonable accommodation is possible, Yeom may exclude the employee from the workplace. He said exclusion may ultimately result in the termination of the employee's employment.

IPI short by $13K for latest payroll

By JUSTINE NAUTA
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REPORTER

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI), LLC failed to satisfy the entire payroll last Friday but is expected to come up with the rest of its workers' salaries sometime this week.

In a status report to the U.S. District Court for the NMI, IPI counsel Michael W. Dotts said there was a shortfall of $13,966.34 for the Feb. 26 payroll. Dotts said that IPI had a total net payroll of $83,860.55 but was only able to pay $69,894.21. The shortfall of $13,966.34 is being sent from Hong Kong and IPI is expected to receive it this Wednesday or Thursday. Dotts said that IPI's next payday is March 12, 2021.

Fortunately, Dotts said, IPI employee's housing still has power and food services is continuing without interruption.

IPI has experienced several instances of delays in releasing employee salaries in the past and the company only managed to clear its debt to current employees earlier this year after being found in contempt in a lawsuit filed by the U.S. Department of Labor. That lawsuit accused IPI executives of unlawfully requiring stranded employees to work without pay during the pandemic and failing to meet the workers' basic necessities or provide for their return to their home countries.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, USDOL said that IPI executives should pay $788,022.54 to their employees and pay USDOL $1,379,426 in back wages owed under the judgment.

IPI then agreed to pay USDOL a total of $3,360,000 for back wages, liquidated damages, and civil monetary penalties.

As of Feb. 24, IPI was already up to date with payroll.

Commonwealth Casino Commission executive director Andrew Yeom informed the CCC commissioners at the board's monthly meeting last Feb. 24 that IPI's payroll delay has been resolved at the moment. He said that IPI paid the payrolls for Jan. 1, 2021 to Feb. 12, 2021.

IPI should hire from outside for the CEO job, says senator

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Sen. Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) speaks at the Senate session last Thursday.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Sen. Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) believes Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC should hire someone "from the outside" for the CEO job, to ensure that the person will have the qualifications to fix the multitude of problems currently besetting the exclusive Saipan casino licensee.

Speaking at the Senate session last Thursday, DeLeon Guerrero said this person should not only guide IPI but also guide the CNMI government when it comes to the casino industry.

The senator talked about IPI in reaction to IPI chief executive officer Ray N. Yumul's letter last month to the Legislature that outlined the company's strategy to recover.

"The CNMI must cease looking for instant solution to the CNMI's financial situation," she said, adding that this "bad habit" of looking for instant solutions is why the Commonwealth is now at risk.

In his letter to Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) and House Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (R-Saipan), Yumul sought legislative action to allow IPI to pay $5.7 million of the $15.5 million it was supposed to pay last August for the casino license fee. The remaining $9,802,570 of the 2020 license fee would then be paid in five equal annual installments beginning in 2023, according to IPI's proposal. Yumul said in his letter that allowing IPI to pay the $5.7 million now will help the government prevent the termination of 180 government employees on furlough.

Yumul said that IPI offers to pay a portion of the $15.5 million annual casino license fee despite knowing that casino operations will not be possible for this license period.

DeLeon Guerrero said IPI and the CNMI government had no real understanding of what will work from the getgo. "It went for the grandiose idea [that] was not financially or economically possible. The CNMI government allowed this to happen," she said.

DeLeon Guerrero said this is a time to ask for a permanent change in the rules. "Process is paramount, process that is wide open to the public and is cemented in accountability. When disclosure is absent, there's no public discussion," she said.

The senator cited a Saipan Chamber of Commerce message to the government, where it expressed its concerns about the casino industry, and how accountability and compliance with laws and regulations must be addressed.

She also cited the U.S. Department of Labor's filing in the U.S. District Court for the NMI about putting IPI on receivership.

DeLeon Guerrero said her review of IPI's mother company in Hong Kong, Imperial Pacific International Holdings Limited, shows that earnings of the CNMI casino industry declined 53.8% over the past five years. "Are they in good financial position? The report…that I looked at says they have less than one year of cash," DeLeon Guerrero said.

"Mr. president, we need to protect first and foremost the interest of our CNMI and our people. We can no longer continue to bend over on concessions without any industry-recognized analysts report," she said, in addressing Hofschneider, who presided over the session.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Secretary of Public Works
2nd Floor Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan, MP 96950

INVITATION FOR BIDS
DPW21-ITB-020

MARPI LANDFILL CELL 2 REHABILITATION

Governor Ralph Dlg. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the Department of Public Works (DPW) are soliciting sealed bids for **Marpi Landfill Cell 2 Rehabilitation, Saipan** Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

The project package will be available on or after **February 17, 2021** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan. A non-refundable payment of One Hundred Fifty Dollars ($150.00) is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Teasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at the DPW Technical Services Division.

All interested bidders are also required to include Insurer Clearance Certification (ICC) in their bid packages in order to bid on this project. The ICC can be obtained at the Department of Commerce/Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) on Capitol Hill.

Bidding procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations currently in effect."

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITUES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **March 05, 2021**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the Department of Public Works Conference Room 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center Office, Saipan. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **March 16, 2021** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

Prospective bidders should examine and review the invitation for bids with care. If it should appear to a prospective bidder that the performance of the work under the contract or any of the matters relative thereto is not sufficiently described or explained in the invitation for bids, or that any discrepancy exists between different parts of the invitation for bids, or that full intent of the invitation for bids is not clear, then the prospective bidder shall submit a written request for clarification no later than ten (10) working days before the scheduled bid opening at 4:30 pm to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547.

The prospective bidder shall examine carefully the site of the proposed work and the invitation for bids before submitting a bid.

The Contracting Officer (CO) may, upon recommendation of the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR), issue an addendum notifying all prospective bidders known to have received an invitation for bids, or if issued after the deadline for submission of the notice of intention to bid, to those persons who submitted such notice, of any changes to the invitation for bids. The Department of Public Works will make every reasonable attempt to notify all persons who obtained the invitation for bids from the Technical Services Division by telephone to pick up the addendum or if the CO chooses, the addendum may be mailed or delivered personally or by facsimile machine. If the bid proposal requires the acknowledgment of addenda, the prospective bidder shall indicate the date of each addendum in the space provided. **It shall be the prospective bidder's responsibility to confirm the existence of any addendum by telephoning the COTR at (670) 234-9828 no later than ten (10) Calendar days before the scheduled bid opening.**

Sealed bids must be marked **"DPW21-ITB-020"**. For bidders within the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the Office of the Director of Procurement Services located at the former Emergency Management Office, Ascencion Drive, Building No. 1301, Capitol Hill, Saipan, no later than **9:30 a.m. local time March 23, 2021**. Bidders located outside of the CNMI must fill out the Notice of Intent Form in order to receive this additional Seven (7) working days for receipt of their bid documents. Notices of Intent form may be submitted to the Director of Procurement Services no later than **9:30 a.m, local time, March 23, 2021**, and must be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via e-mail to a.magofna@dof.gov.mp. **Note that failure to submit this Notice of Intent Form will be subject to the rejection of bid**. For bidders located outside the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than March 23, 2021 and the BID documents must be received at the Office of the Director of Procurement Services no later than April 02, 2021. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicly opened and read at the Office of the Director of Procurement Services, located at the former Emergency Management Office, Ascencion Drive, Building No. 1301, Capitol Hill, Saipan, at **9:30 a.m. local time, April 06, 2021.** However, if no notices of intent to bid were received from bidders outside the CNMI, bids will be opened at **9:30 a.m. local time, on March 23, 2021**.

For bids greater than Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (**$25,000.00**) a bid security of fifteen (15%) of the bid amount must accompany the bid. **Bid security shall be on a bid bond, in cash, by certified check, cashiers check or other form acceptable to the government. A surety company shall hold the certificate of authority from the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety requiring approval of the Attorney General must be pre-approved prior to bid submission**. Checks must be made payable to the CNMI Treasurer, with the name of the bidder and a notation on the face of the check: "Credit Account No. 44660". If a bid bond is submitted it must be accompanied by an Insurer Clearance Certification (ICC).

The bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations **§70-30.3-245**. The responsible bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be awarded a contract with the CNMI Government and will be required to deliver Performance and Payment bonds, each equal to 100% of the contract price for contracts greater than $25,000.00. Prior to the execution of the contract, the selected contractor shall submit:

a) A current license from the bonding company showing that it has authority to issue bond in the CNMI, and
b) A certification from the bonding company that the unencumbered value of its assets (exclusive of all outstanding commitments on other bond obligations) exceed the penal amount of each bond.

A contractor submitting an unacceptable payment or performance bond may be permitted a reasonable time, as determined by the P&S Director, to substitute an acceptable bond prior to executing a contract.

Acceptable assets are only:

1) Cash
2) US Gov't Securities
3) Stocks and Bonds traded on US Security Exchange
4) Real Property owned in fee simple in US; and
5) Irrevocable Letters of Credit

Performance time for completion of this project is **Two Hundred Forty (240) calendar days** upon issuance of Notice to Proceed. Liquidated damages for delays beyond the established completion date will be assessed at the rate of **Five Hundred (US$500.00)** for each and every day the work is delayed beyond the established completion date.

All bid documents received shall become the sole property of the CNMI Government. The Government reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any imperfection in a bid proposal that does not affect the elements of price, quantity, and delivery of the bid, in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

/s/ James A. Ada
Secretary of Public Works

/s/ Francisco C. Aguon
Acting Director Division of Procurement Services

Motorcade honors parent leaders of 2021

NEIL FAMA

Parent leader Rowena Coloma poses with her family in front of their family car, which she used during the motorcade for Parent Leadership Month last Feb 24.

By NEIL FAMA
neil_fama@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Division of Youth Services put many parent leaders center stage last Saturday, Feb. 27, with a motorcade that began at the Commonwealth Ports Authority football field.

The motorcade, which was intended to honor parent leaders in the CNMI this year, capped a series of activities DYS held last month to honor parents who take active roles in their children's growth and learning.

The convoy started from the CPA football field and passed through As Terlaje, then along Middle Road all the way to As Matuis, then circled back via Beach Road, down to San Antonio, and finally ending up at the Koblerville Youth Center.

A total of 50 vehicles participated in the motorcade, which consisted of many parent leaders, community partners, Division of Youth Services staff and volunteers, and Miss Earth CNMI 2021.

"The goal of the motorcade was to highlight and recognize the 2021 exemplary parent leaders and celebrating them out in the community," according to DYS administrator Vivian T. Sablan.

Sablan thanked the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs' DYS Parent Leadership Month Committee Members, partners, DYS staff, and donors for the monthlong celebration.

Supreme Court to weigh PR access to US aid

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Supreme Court agreed Monday to decide whether it is unconstitutional to exclude people living in Puerto Rico from Supplemental Social Security Income.

The justices said they would hear an appeal, first filed by the Trump administration, of a lower-court ruling that held that residents of the U.S. territory should have the same access to SSI benefits as older, disabled and blind Americans in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The administration argues that a pair of 40-year-old Supreme Court decisions already upheld the federal law that created SSI and excluded Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories from it. Congress later added in the Mariana Islands.

In recent months, a federal judge ruled that Puerto Rico residents should have access to other federal welfare benefits from which they have been excluded as well. A federal judge in Guam said residents of that Pacific island also should be able to collect SSI.

A separate program, Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled, covers residents of the territories, but it has more stringent eligibility requirements and pays less generous benefits than SSI.

More NMC Nursing graduates pass NCLEX-RN

Angello

Masga

Reyes

Three Northern Marianas College graduates—John Angello, Camille Masga, and Mark Reyes—have passed the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses or NCLEX-RN.

The NCLEX-RN exam is the exam nursing graduates in the CNMI have to pass in order to be able to practice nursing. The exam tests the knowledge, skills, and abilities of nursing graduates in order to certify that they are equipped with the capability to apply entry level nursing practices correctly.

"It's great to see more and more NMC nursing graduates pass the challenging NCLEX-RN," said NMC interim president Frankie Eliptico. "I congratulate John, Camille, and Mark on this accomplishment."

NMC Nursing Department chair Rosa Aldan also congratulated the three on their achievements. "John, Camille, and Mark have bright futures in the nursing field and we expect to see great things from them as their educational and professional journeys continue," Aldan said.

Angello, a former hospital corpsman for the U.S. Navy said that NMC was supportive in his endeavor to become a nurse. "I found out that patient care is my greatest passion [while in the Navy,]" Angello said. He is currently working at the Rota Health Center.

According to Masga, her motivation for pursuing a nursing degree was the love she has for helping others. "I knew that nursing was not only a profession but an ongoing passion that would include helping others achieve their highest level of wellness," Masga said.

For Reyes, NMC's nursing instructors prepared him well for the NCLEX-RN. His advice to students planning to take the NCLEX-RN: Never give up. "Be sure to always challenge yourself and test your limits," Reyes said.

For more information about NMC's nursing program, email Aldan at rosa.aldan@marianas.edu or call 237-6744. ***(NMC)***

GMS holds parent leadership meetings throughout February

February was National Parent Leadership Month, dedicated to honoring the tireless efforts of parents and those who parental roles for the CNMI's youth. In observation of the month, the Green Meadow School administrative and teaching staff held short leadership seminars every Friday of the month that served as small reminders to all the parents in attendance.

Each seminar had a unique topic. The first meeting on Feb. 5 touched on the topic of responsibility. GMS president Glenn Songcuan, assisted by fourth-grade class adviser Rosalie Habijan, shared a number of roles and duties that parents are (and are not!) responsible for.

On Feb. 12, GMS teachers Lorelisa Espiritu and Bona Angeles highlighted the importance of emergency preparedness and shared the emergency plans and policies in place at Green Meadow School.

On Feb. 19, the Division of Youth Services made a guest presentation, speaking about the topic of "Child Abuse and Neglect." While being a sensitive subject, parents and school staff need to be aware in order to identify potential cases of abuse and neglect and act accordingly. This special presentation was conducted by DYS representatives Juanicia Villanueva and Melycher Sablan.

In addition, GMS principal Milagros Songcuan shared her own personal experiences and former GMS parent leaders were invited to speak and share their experiences and how they overcame hardships. Will and Gemma Pamintuan were invited to speak on the importance of discipline when raising a child.

The final meeting last Feb. 26 had GMS awarding certificates to parents to acknowledge their efforts. Former Department of Cultural and Community Affairs Secretary Robert Hunter was guest speaker. ***(PR)***

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building
P.O. Box 501220 CK • Saipan, MP 96950-1220
Telephone: (670) 664-4282 • Facsimile: (670) 235-5131

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to the Open Government Act (1 CMC §9901 et seq), the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation ("CUC") Board of Directors hereby informs the general public that the Board will hold a **Special Board meeting** on **Thursday, March 4, 2021** at **1:00 p.m.** The meeting will be held at the CUC Conference Room, Room 17, 3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building to consider the following agenda. Public attendance is welcome.

AGENDA*

I. Preliminary Matters
 A. Call to Order
 B. Roll Call
 C. Reading of the Notice of the Agenda
 D. Adoption of Agenda

II. Integrated Resource Plan ("IRP")

III. Public Comments*

IV. Executive Session**
 (Consultation with Legal Counsel)

V. Adjournment

_____/s/_____
MIRANDA V. MANGLONA, CHAIRPERSON
CUC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

* Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Agenda maybe modified during the meeting.
** Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Board of Directors may vote to meet in executive session at any time.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Gao, Julie Marie S. Petitioner, vs. Gao, Feng Respondent,

FCD-DI CIVIL ACTION NO. 20-0337

SUMMONS FOR PUBLICATION

TO THE ABOVE NAME RESPONDENT:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is on file with the court, within thirty (30) days after service of the Summons upon you, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to the Petitioner whose address is P.O. Box 503236 CK Saipan, MP 96950 as soon as practical after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Courts for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at Susupe, Saipan, MP 96950, It may be prepared for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or Mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice. If you fail to file and answer in accordance with this summons, judgement by default may be taken against you for relief in the complaint.

Dated this 20th day of October, 2020.

/s/ Clerk of Court

NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION

Please take notice that Payless ShoeSource Saipan, Inc. (the "corporation") filed articles of dissolution with the CNMI Registrar of Corporations pursuant to CNMI law on December 15, 2020.

Anyone with a claim against the corporation is requested to submit it in accordance with the following:

1. The claim shall be made in writing and shall state the name of the claimant, the amount of the claim, the factual basis for the claim, and the name, mailing address, email address, and telephone number of the person who may be contacted by the corporation with respect to the claim.
2. The claim may be sent to: Payless ShoeSource Saipan, Inc., 4910 Corporate Centre Drive, Suite 210, Lawrence, Kansas 66047.
3. A claim against the corporation will be barred unless a proceeding to enforce the claim is commenced within five years after the publication of the notice.

Payless ShoeSource Saipan, Inc.

NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION

Oram Co., a CNMI Corporation was dissolved on March 14, 2020. Creditor and person with an outstanding claim against the Company is requested to notify the corporate office as soon as possible.

Oram Co.
PMB 768, Box 10000,
Saipan, MP 96950

SCOTUS puts equality for citizens in the US territories on its docket

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Supreme Court announced yesterday it will be reviewing a ruling from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit that unanimously found it unconstitutional to deny low-income elderly, blind and disabled residents of Puerto Rico the same access to federal support enjoyed by other Americans living in the states and certain other territories.

In *United States v. Vaello-Madero*, decided by the First Circuit last year, the United States is seeking to recover $28,081in Supplemental Security Income payments that Jose Luis Vaello-Madero received after moving from New York to Puerto Rico. Altogether, federal discrimination against residents of U.S. territories each year denies billions of dollars in critical support to the most vulnerable U.S. citizens in these areas.

The United States is also seeking reversal in two other cases where federal judges have ruled in favor of equality for U.S. citizens living in the territories. In *Schaller v. U.S. Social Security Administration*, currently pending before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, a federal district court judge in Guam reached a similar ruling that the denial of SSI benefits to a disabled woman in Guam was unconstitutional. And in *Peña Martínez v. U.S. Department of Health & Human Service*, currently pending before the First Circuit, a federal district court judge in Puerto Rico ruled unconstitutional not just the denial of SSI benefits, but also the exclusion or Puerto Rico residents from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Medicare Part D low-income subsidies.

"Equality for U.S. citizens in Puerto Rico and other territories is on the line as the U.S. Supreme Court reviews the First Circuit's landmark decision ruling that the arbitrary denial of SSI benefits to residents of the territories is unconstitutional," said Neil Weare, president and founder of Equally American, a nonpartisan public interest organization that works to advance equality and voting rights in U.S. territories. "SSI is a vital lifeline for millions of low-income disabled and elderly Americans, and there is no basis for arbitrarily excluding citizens living in the territories from this safety net."

Last September, Presidential candidate Joe Biden tweeted in response to DOJ's decision to seek Supreme Court review to reverse *Vaello-Madero* that, "This ends when I'm elected President." In fact, the Biden-Harris campaign made equality for Puerto Rico a central part of his campaign.

"With the Supreme Court granting review in *Vaello-Madero*, President Joe Biden and the U.S. Department of Justice are put in an awkward position. Absent the kind of shift DOJ has made in other recent cases, this Administration will in effect be arguing in favor of continued discrimination against the most vulnerable residents of Puerto Rico and other territories," Weare said. "This is the kind of case where DOJ should consider reversing its position. After all, it is hard to see how asking the Supreme Court to help collect money from a disabled Puerto Rican man who does not have it is consistent with a pledge to treat citizens in the territories with 'dignity and respect.'" ***(PR)***

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-21-020

Installation of Sludge Dewatering Equipment

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Installation of Sludge Dewatering Equipment in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The intent of the contract is for the Contractor to provide all labor, equipment, supplies and materials necessary to complete the scope of work which consists of; installation of sludge dewatering equipment including the screw press skid (OFCI) for full function. The work shall include; selective demolition of existing improvements, the installation of sludge dewatering units (OFCI), shaftless auger conveyor (OFCI), installation of pressure pumps, installation of water storage tanks, and rehabilitation and modification of existing improvements, along with other miscellaneous features, for one unit at Sadog Tasi Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) and one unit at Agingan WWTP. The work shall be completed with minimal disruption to the daily operation of the Sadog Tasi WWTP and Agingan WWTP. CUC requires the Project to be completed in 180 calendar days from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, oeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of **$100.00** (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **March 9, 2021 at 10:00 AM** (ChST) at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked "CUC-IFB-21-020, Installation of Sludge Dewatering Equipment" to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on March 29, 2021, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the Unites States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. A *Payment Bond* of one Hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 a.m. (ChST) on March 16, 2021 to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Westen Knudsen, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email address westen.knudsen@cucgov.org and to Marcela Tenorio, P&S, Senior Administrative Technician - marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

CNMI DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

PUBLIC NOTICE

The CNMI Department of Commerce, Central Statistics Division is now conducting the CNMI 2021 Prevailing Wage Study (PWS) survey and notifies all businesses and employers in the CNMI to log on to the CSD Data Collection Portal and complete the PWS survey questionnaire.

All private businesses, public agencies, and organizations in the CNMI, with and without employees, are urged to participate in the 2021 PWS survey.

The survey data collection period will begin on March 1, 2021, and end on March 31, 2021.

Data Collection Portal Link: https://cnmidata.commerce.gov.mp/

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

****IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS ARE NOW AVAILABLE BY APPOINTMENT****

Guam Benefits Office
770 East Sunset Blvd
Suite #165
Tamuning, GU 96913

How do I make an appointment?

- Access Appointment Link (copy & paste link into browser): **https://v2.waitwhile.com/checkin/vaguambenefitsoffice**
- Access through the Honolulu Regional Office website (copy & paste link into browser): **https://www.benefits.va.gov/honolulu/**
- Call (671) 687-2096 for assistance

Benefits Counselors will be available to address Non-Health Care related inquiries related to Compensation, Pension, Survivor Benefits, Claims, Appeals, Status Requests, Etc. and assistance with the claim process.

Note: At this time, assistance with Veteran Readiness & Employment services will continue through phone or video conferencing. If you have difficulties with this process and need to contact your counselor, please call us at (671) 648-0092.

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Welcome medicine: Johnson & Johnson's vaccine could make vaccinations much simpler

This weekend marked another step in defeating COVID-19 as the FDA approved Johnson & Johnson's vaccine, giving America 100 million additional doses by this summer, another wonderful life-saving weapon against the deadly virus. Coming a day after President Joe Biden celebrated the 50 millionth shot jabbed in an arm, victory seems near.

On the two principal goals, avoiding COVID hospitalizations and deaths, studies show that J&J is batting a thousand. If you have a chance to get a shot, take it. The same goes for the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNtech vaccines.

Besides adding a third option to our arsenal, the J&J vaccine is much more convenient than the other two. It is a single dose, and doesn't require ultra-cold storage, making it much easier to handle than the Moderna and Pfizer shots. Those both require two shots, administered weeks apart, to be fully effective. Pfizer's ultra-cold storage requirements, which the FDA relaxed last week, limited where shots could be kept and used, restricting distribution sites to places like hospitals with costly refrigerators capable of maintaining the negative 70 degrees Celsius temperature required to keep the Pfizer shots viable.

The Johnson & Johnson shot's future availability should turbocharge efforts in New York and around the country to get more shots delivered to more places—to churches, doctors, nonprofits and health care clinics that have established relationships with hard-to-reach but vulnerable people—the elderly, nonwhite, non-English speaking residents whose biggest obstacle to getting a shot at this point isn't vaccine hesitancy but difficulties they face getting an appointment. For example, Manhattan's 125 available vaccine sites are nearly double the 69 locations to get shots in the Bronx, despite the boroughs' similar-size populations.

Difficulty finding doses, trusting the dose-givers, and getting to where shots are given has meant just 15% of eligible elderly Black New Yorkers had gotten vaccinated as of earlier last week, compared to 30% of eligible elderly white New Yorkers.

We've got the tools we need. Get shots into the arms that need them, now.

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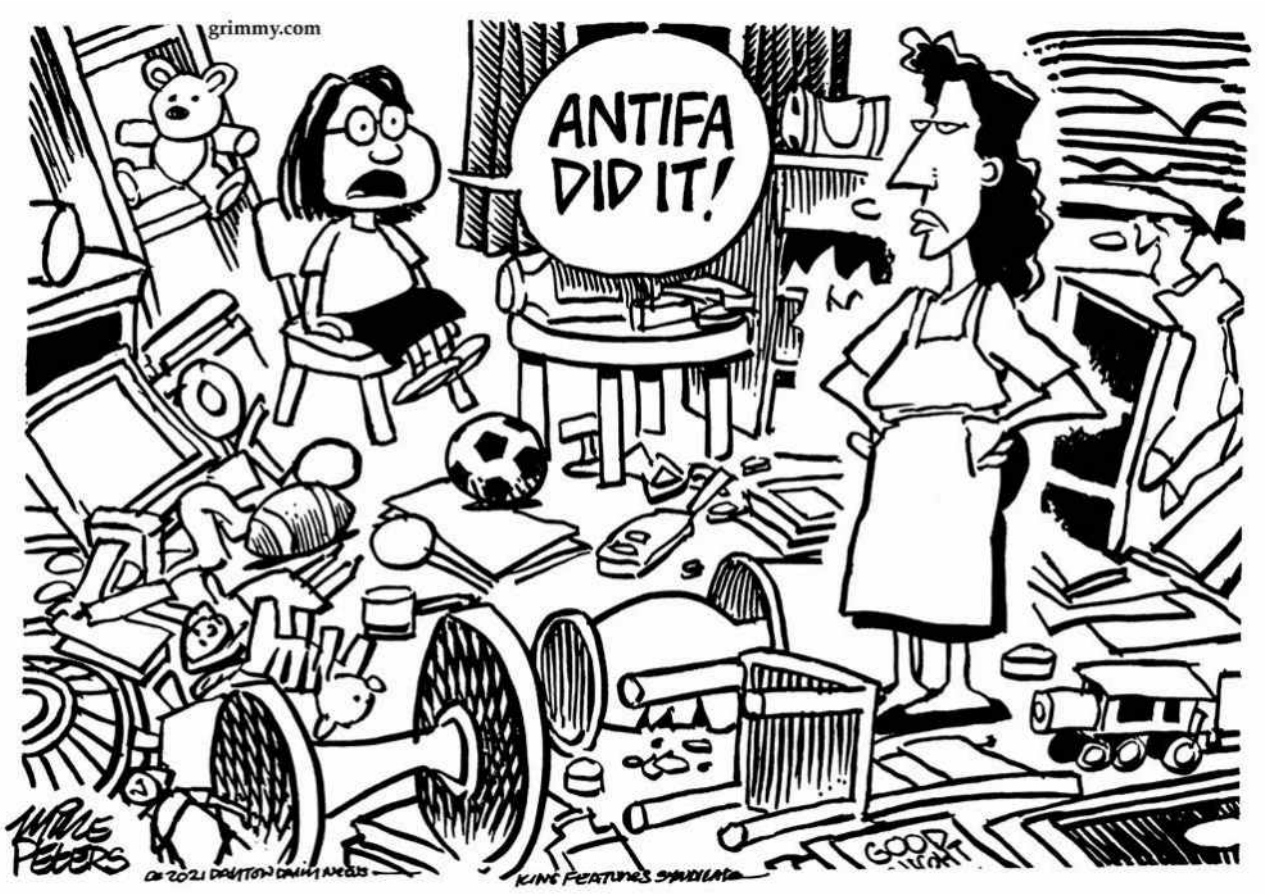

Stimulus spending might do nothing but add more debt

By RAMESH PONNURU
Bloomberg View

Ramesh Ponnuru is a Bloomberg View columnist. He is a senior editor at National Review, visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and contributor to CBS News.

President Joe Biden's top legislative priority goes by two names: "COVID relief" and "stimulus." The two terms help reporters and politicians avoid repetition, but they also point to the two main purposes the bill is supposed to serve.

It would, among other things, send $1,400 checks to most households. That can be defended as relief: It helps people who have been harmed by the economic fallout of the pandemic. It can also be defended as a stimulus: Recipients will spend some of the money, and their purchases will boost the economy.

Critics of the bill as a form of stimulus mostly say it would be too stimulative. The economy, they say, won't need federal help as more and more of us get vaccinated, and a big stimulus bill will leave the nation with too much debt and too much inflation.

I don't share the worry about inflation. Market indicators of expected inflation, adjusted for some measurement issues, currently suggest that it is going to run well below the Federal Reserve's 2% target during the next five years.

My concern about spending federal money for the purpose of stimulus is different: I think it's unlikely to have much stimulative effect. It will increase the federal debt without leaving the economy appreciably bigger than it would have been without the bill.

The case for fiscal stimulus relies heavily on models suggesting that when an economy is operating below its potential, government spending can close the gap. The models also suggest that too much spending can cause the economy to "overheat."

Much of the debate has concerned how far we are from reaching the economy's full potential, and which of these results is therefore more likely. But the models don't take adequate account of how fiscal and monetary policy interact.

Consider one scenario: Congress, moved by Biden's warning that previous stimulus measures have been too small, expands the bill from its current $1.9 trillion to $3 trillion and passes it. Expected annual inflation jumps, for the first time in decades, above 3%.

The cries that the Fed must act to stop overheating get louder. The Fed, which wanted inflation to rise but not this rapidly, responds by raising interest rates faster than it would have done without the huge stimulus bill and the spike in inflation expectations. Those expectations then drop back down.

In that case, the Fed would have undone at least a significant fraction of the stimulative effect of the bill. It would have counteracted the stimulus not out of a deliberate aim to subvert it, but out of a desire to keep inflation under control. If it overreacted, the Fed could more than completely counteract the stimulative effect of the bill: It could throw the economy into a recession it would not otherwise have entered.

Or consider another scenario: Congress passes a large stimulus bill, but expected inflation doesn't rise much, because markets assume that the Fed would act to keep it in check. Household and business decisions about consumption and investment reflect the expectation that the economy isn't going to get much hotter. Total spending levels don't rise much, that is, in response to the bill.

In this case, too, the stimulative effect would be weak. The composition of the economy might be significantly affected: By spending money on certain things, Congress can direct resources toward some sectors of the economy and away from others. If Congress decided to spend all the money in North Dakota, the state would have a boom at the expense of other places. Federal debt projections would look more ominous. But the economy wouldn't have expanded much overall.

Several conclusions follow from these thought experiments.

First, any stimulative effect of increased federal spending depends on how the central bank reacts to changing economic conditions and how businesses and households expect it to react.

Second, because of this, fiscal stimulus will have a smaller positive effect—possibly one quite a bit smaller, and possibly even a negative one.

Third, increased expectations for inflation and for total levels of spending in the economy would expand the economy even if accomplished through means other than a stimulus bill.

Taken together, these points don't obliterate the case for the legislation before Congress. Spending money to speed the pace of vaccination will likely help the economy, just not via the route of putting dollars in people's pockets.

But if fiscal stimulus leads to a significant degree of monetary offset, it shrinks the case for that legislation—and suggests that the legislation itself should shrink, too.

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Jefferson would cringe at the destruction of local media—Congress must act

By JOHN G. CHACHAS
Chicago Tribune

John G. Chachas is the founder and a managing partner of Methuselah Advisors, a financial advisory firm specializing in media and digital content.

In 1787, on the eve of the French Revolution, Thomas Jefferson wrote to Edward Carrington, dispatched to the Continental Congress, on the role of a free press. If he had to choose between "a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government," Jefferson wrote, "I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter." The founding father feared governments, including the one he helped design, would become predatory if unchecked by a knowledgeable citizenry. And here we are.

Today, local enterprise journalism is about to succumb to a different kind of threat as large digital platforms, led by Google, Facebook and Twitter, warp the value chain of original content. Like a stealthy neighbor, Jefferson's daily newspaper has been stolen by these digital platforms, which use the content but pay nothing for the privilege.

This digital theft has been unwittingly supported by algorithmically herded consumers who have been trained to expect content on-demand at the mere cost of a few keystrokes. To them, the idea of paying for news is as puzzling an anachronism as the founder's powdered wig. The value derived from consumers' attention online has accrued to the top three digital platforms, leaving content creators and those responsible for maintaining publications with mere crumbs.

In a race to the bottom, publishers now chase digital traffic with controversial and partisan clickbait rather than the reasoned and substantial reporting necessary for an informed electorate

So how did this happen? How is it that the creators of news, knowing full well they have legal copyright protection under the U.S. Copyright Act, have allowed the digital platforms to gain such power? The immense reach of Google's search engine, the dominance of Facebook's 1.5 billion social media subscribers, and the prolific growth of Twitter's consumer broadcast platform occurred under the watch of enterprise journalism. Many hearings could be spent dissecting how this happened. Complacency or fear of being left out of the digital ecosystem by local journalists is partly responsible for allowing unrestricted access and use of their content for far too long.

Today, these digital platforms represent as much as 60% or more of digital traffic for some news creators. It is an impossible challenge for even large dailies such as the Chicago Tribune to tell Google, "if you don't pay us, then your search customer cannot see our content any longer." Local publishers have little leverage.

The three largest and most nationally distributed news creators in American publishing—The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today—may have enough reach and gravitas to survive the digital transformation.

Unfortunately, the economic data on the survival prospects for papers such as the Los Angeles Times, Salt Lake Tribune, Seattle Times, Denver Post and a deep list across this nation is bleak at best.

The downsizing of local news coverage has been astonishing. Since 2004, more than 1,800 newspapers have closed in the United States, and the pace of closures has only accelerated during the pandemic. Worse, there is no realistic mechanism where their attempts at digital monetization can sustain operations.

Imagine the consequence if the authoritative newsgathering organizations covering state legislatures across this country cease to deliver their local coverage. One can only wonder what the California state budget might look like if the Sacramento Bee isn't doing investigative reporting.

The solution is not complicated. Google, Facebook and Twitter must acknowledge that their billions of daily users benefit from access to edited, fact-checked and verified local information. These platforms, directly and indirectly, earn what some estimate could be $10 billion annually from their access to this "free" content. Sorry, it isn't free. It is being stolen. It is long past time the American publishers were paid a fair and appropriate license payment for access to their product.

The payment mechanism is not new. The Copyright Tribunal establishes mechanisms and license payments for all types of copyright-protected intellectual property. Music publishers and artists are routinely compensated for the reuse and republication of their assets.

The governments of Australia, France and now Canada have taken steps in recent weeks to force such payments, with Google and Facebook threatening to withdraw all search and social media in reply.

If Google, Facebook and Twitter can't recognize and acknowledge it is both fair and a legal right for the publishers of content to be paid, then Congress must act. It would be logical and preferable for the digital platforms to enter into consensual agreements to pay appropriate use fees to publishers as mandated under existing laws.

If Congress fails to act, the economic cost will be nothing compared to the damage to the nation's electorate. It's time to acknowledge the essential role of fact-checked local journalism in our democratic society.

If Jefferson were watching, he would be worried.

Nuclear war was barely averted in 1983. Let that guide US-China relations now

By IVO DAALDER
Chicago Tribune

Ivo Daalder is the president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and a former U.S. ambassador to NATO.

Like many who have been locked down at home this past year, I've been passing the time by binge-watching TV, mainly foreign series. Among the best of these is the "Deutschland" series, about East German spies in the latter days of the Cold War, much of it based on real events.

The first season, which takes place in 1983, at a time of heightened East-West tension, deals with the growing fears in Moscow and East Berlin that NATO might launch a surprise nuclear attack under the guise of one of its annual military exercises. We have long known about Soviet fears of war at the time, but newly declassified documents released by the U.S. State Department last week suggest we came much closer to war than anyone realized at the time.

The episode is instructive, not only from a historical perspective, but as a warning that as strategic competition between the United States and China heats up, it's critically important that both sides take steps to reduce the chance of a war that neither side wants.

1983 was a fraught year in U.S.-Soviet relations. President Ronald Reagan had come to office determined to end the Cold War standoff through a massive military buildup that an ailing Soviet economy could not afford to match. He had denounced the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" and promised to leave Communism on the "ash heap of history." He'd refused meeting with his Soviet counterpart, something all of his predecessors had done.

And despite massive public protests, Reagan stuck with the NATO-approved plan to deploy a new generation of nuclear missiles in Europe that could reach the Soviet Union. The first of the Pershing-II missiles, which could strike targets within seven minutes from launch, were scheduled to arrive in Germany in November 1983.

It was against this backdrop that NATO conducted a series of military exercises, culminating in "Able Archer," a tabletop exercise that simulated the transition from conventional fighting to nuclear war. Able Archer was anything but routine that year. It coincided with the deployment of 19,000 U.S. troops to Europe, putting B-52 bombers visibly armed with dummy warheads on runway alert, and raising the U.S. threat level to its highest alert. Top political leaders participated in the war game (including British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and U.S. Vice President George Bush). NATO commanders operated from alternate war headquarters.

Soviet intelligence was closely observing all of these moves, as the U.S. intelligence community knew they would. But rather than seeing the actions as part of a routine exercise that the United States and its NATO allies conducted annually, a growing number of people in Moscow began to fear that the exercise was actually a preparation for launching a nuclear attack against the Soviet Union.

And these fears, we now know, were translated into Soviet actions that had previously been taken only during actual crises. Senior commanders of the Soviet rocket forces deployed to their command centers and placed nuclear forces on heightened alert. This included 75 SS-20 missiles, which were moved out of their garrisons to war-fighting deployments, as well as an unknown number of the 10-warhead SS-19s.

Even more worrisome, the newly released documents show the Soviet military ordered all units of the Soviet 4th Air Army in Eastern Europe to make "preparations for the immediate use of nuclear weapons." This included loading actual nuclear bombs on planes in East Germany and Poland that would be ready for takeoff in under 30 minutes.

The increased preparations suggest that key Soviet officials believed war was imminent. Fortunately, the U.S. intelligence chief monitoring Soviet activities during the exercise recommended not responding to the Soviet actions, correctly believing that they were a response to what NATO was doing and that any further U.S. escalation could trigger an actual war.

A major after-action review of what came to be known as the Soviet "war scare" conducted in 1990 and only recently declassified, concluded that in "1983 we may have inadvertently placed our relations with the Soviet Union on a hair trigger." There had been a real danger of "a pre-emptive strike against the U.S. in response to a perceived but non-existent threat."

There are many lessons to be learned from this episode. Reagan learned the most important—that to understand your adversary you need to talk and engage with them. From then on, Reagan was more interested in meeting with Soviet leaders to talk peace than continuing to prepare for war.

The broader lesson is that competition between opposing military powers can produce their own, destructive dynamics as each assumes the worst about the other's intentions. That is why intense dialogue, among military as well as political leaders, is critical even between countries that view themselves as adversaries.

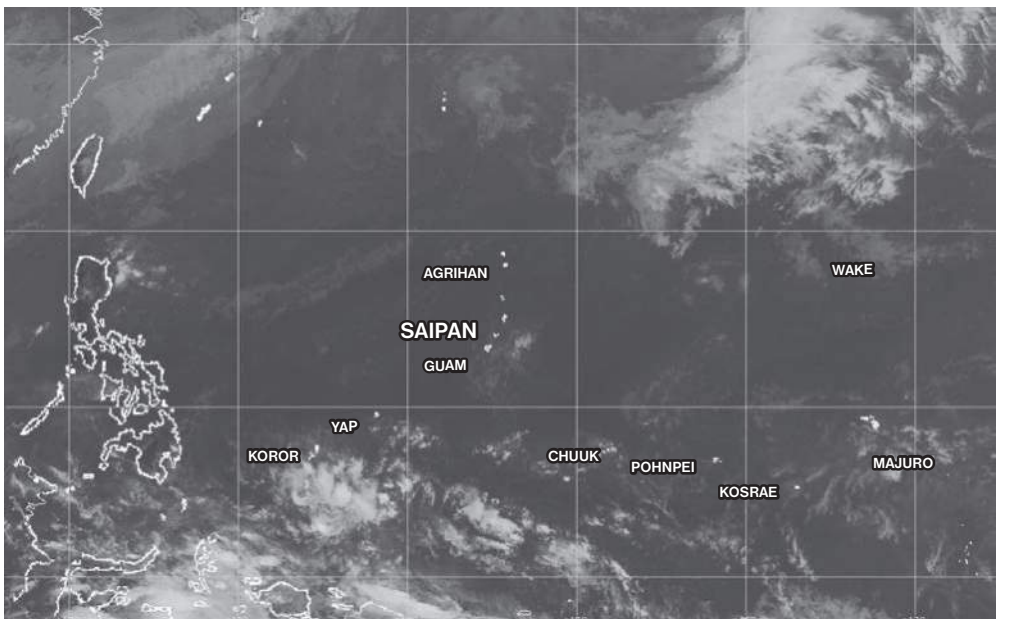
Even as the competition and rhetoric between China and the United States heats up, engaging in a broad dialogue will be important to avoid tensions escalating into a military confrontation neither sides wants.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly sunny with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers.
87º 77º	87º 77º	86º 76º	87º 77º	87º 77º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:24 AM, TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows a trade-wind disturbance just east of the Marianas waters. The buoys reveal combined seas of 8 to 10 feet, composed of a large north swell and east trade-wind waves and swell.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Cloudy	86 | 77 °F
Palau	Rain	86 | 77 °F
Yap	Mostly cloudy	84 | 71 °F
Chuuk	Overcast	84 | 80 °F
Pohnpei	Overcast	82 | 79 °F
Kosrae	Rain	82 | 79 °F
Majuro	Overcast	84 | 79 °F

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:33 AM	6:25 PM
Thursday	6:32 AM	6:25 PM
Friday	6:31 AM	6:25 PM
Saturday	6:31 AM	6:25 PM
Sunday	6:30 AM	6:25 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	9:25 AM	10:16 PM
Thursday	-	10:11 AM	11:16 PM
Friday	-	11:00 AM	5:09 AM
Saturday	12:18 AM	11:52 AM	-
Sunday	1:19 AM	12:48 PM	-

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Sunny	73 | 59 °F
Beijing	Sunny	58 | 28 °F
Hong Kong	Sunny	69 | 62 °F
Honolulu	Rain	82 | 71 °F
London	Scattered Clouds	52 | 44 °F
Los Angeles	Sunny	77 | 48 °F
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	87 | 75 °F
Melbourne	Sunny	76 | 62 °F
Miami	Sunny	80 | 72 °F
New York	Sunny	69 | 48 °F
Osaka	Partly cloudy	56 | 44 °F
Paris	Sunny	53 | 41 °F
Pusan	Mostly Cloudy	47 | 26 °F
Rome	Sunny	60 | 45 °F
Salem	Sunny	52 | 39 °F
San Francisco	Sunny	60 | 44 °F
Seoul	Sunny	50 | 28 °F
Tokyo	Rain	51 | 43 °F
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	77 | 44 °F

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
4:26 AM	Low Tide	0.27
10:28 AM	High Tide	1.88
5:07 PM	Low Tide	0.22
11:04 PM	High Tide	1.69

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❑ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❑ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❑ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❑ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2021

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 6
UA117	7:00am	7:40am	4

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 6
UA174	5:15am	5:56am	4

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:55pm	5:56am+1	3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	5
UA184	10:55pm	4:40am+1	1, 3

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 9, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

Minimum wage hike all but dead in big COVID relief bill

WASHINGTON (AP)—Democrats' hopes of including a minimum wage increase in their $1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill seemed all but dead Monday as the Senate prepared to debate its own version of the House-passed aid package.

Four days after the chamber's parliamentarian said Senate rules forbid inclusion of a straight-out minimum wage increase in the relief measure, Democrats seemed to have exhausted their most realistic options for quickly salvaging the pay hike. In one decision, they abandoned a potential amendment threatening tax increases on big companies that don't boost workers' pay to certain levels.

"At this moment, we may not have a path but I hope we can find one" for pushing the federal pay floor to $15 an hour, said No. 2 Senate Democratic leader Richard Durbin of Illinois.

Senate Democrats hope to unveil their version of the broad relief package and begin debate as early as Wednesday. Congressional leaders want to send President Joe Biden the legislation combating the pandemic and bolstering the economy by March 14, the date emergency jobless benefits that lawmakers approved in December expire.

The overall relief bill is Biden's biggest early legislative priority. It looms as an initial test of his ability to unite Democrats in the Senate—where the party has no votes to spare—and risks lasting damage to his influence should he fail. Republicans are strongly against the legislation and could well oppose it unanimously, as House GOP lawmakers did when that chamber approved the bill early Saturday.

The measure would provide $1,400 payments to individuals plus hundreds of billions of dollars for schools and colleges, COVID-19 vaccines and testing, mass transit systems, renters and small businesses. It also has money for child care, tax breaks for families with children and assistance for states willing to expand Medicaid coverage for low-income residents.

Senate Budget Committee Chairman Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., said he wanted Democrats to ignore the parliamentarian's ruling blocking the minimum wage increase. He also wants them to vote to eliminate filibusters—procedural delays that would take an unachievable 60 votes for Democrats to prevail.

Neither idea seemed to have the support among Democrats or the White House needed to succeed. But Sanders, the Senate's lead sponsor of the hike to $15, said he'd force a vote on an amendment restoring the minimum wage increase anyway.

"This is the soul of the Democratic Party," he said of the proposal. In an acknowledgement that his effort might fall short, he said, "If we fail in this legislation, I will be back" and offer it in the near future.

The Senate is divided 50-50 between the parties with Vice President Kamala Harris able to cast only tie-breaking votes. Democrats are employing a seldom-used procedure for the COVID-19 relief bill that will shield the measure from filibusters.

Biden discussed the relief bill Monday in a virtual meeting with nine Senate Democrats, including Joe Manchin of West Virginia, an opponent of the $15 hourly target. A White House statement said the group was "united in the goal of quickly passing a significant package that reflects the scope of the challenges our country is facing."

Democrats, who will need unanimity to pass the legislation, are pushing for several changes in the House measure.

Manchin told reporters he wants the bill's emergency unemployment benefits, set at $400 weekly by the House, to revert to the current $300 figure enacted in December. That is certain to be divisive and draw strong opposition from progressives.

Leon Guerrero joins APAFS board of governors

Leon Guerrero

HAGATNA, Guam—The Asia Pacific Association for Fiduciary Studies is pleased to announce that Dr. Wilfred Leon Guerrero, chairman of the Government of Guam Retirement Fund, has joined the APAFS board of governors. He will assume the position of board chairman in completion of the term of Gerard Cruz, AIFA, who has left the APAFS board as his term on the GGRF board ended. Cruz served as APAFS chairman for 18 years.

Leon Guerrero has been a trustee with GGRF since 2004 and was elected chairman of the board in 2019. Prior to being elected board chairman, he served as chairman of Investment Committee. His leadership was instrumental in the execution of the board's investment strategy which included the broader diversification of asset classes. At the end of 2020 the market value had grown to approximately $2 billion, doubling the portfolio size from $1 billion dollars when he began.

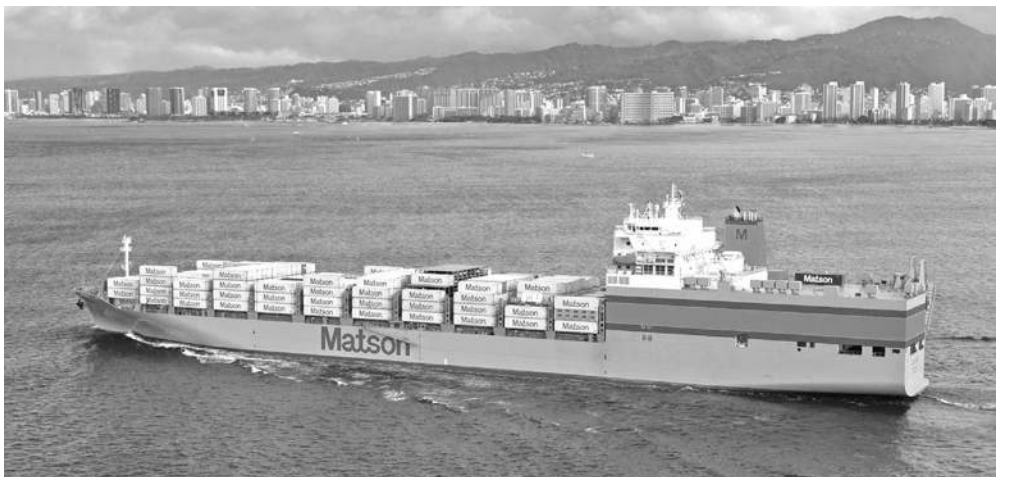
Leon Guerrero is president emeritus of the University of Guam. While at the university, he served as a professor, then dean of the college from 1972 to 1988. Leon Guerrero served as UOG president until from 1988 through 1992.

Leon Guerrero also serves as the chairman of the UOG Endowment Foundation. He is the founding commissioner of the President's Advisory Commission of Asian American and Pacific Islanders. He received his BA from the University of Guam and MA and Ed.D. from the University of Northern Colorado.

Leon Guerrero joins a distinguished group of 16 fiduciaries of institutional funds from throughout the Asia Pacific region on the APAFS board, to include Dr. Patrick Tellei, president of Palau Community College, APAFS board vice chairman; Anna Mendiola, AIF, president, FSM Development Bank, APAFS board secretary; and, Raaj Kurapati, AIFA, CFO, University of Memphis, APAFS board treasurer.

APAFS (www.apafs.org) is a Guam-based 501c3 association whose membership includes institutional investment funds throughout the Pacific Region. Its mission is to promote prudent stewardship and leadership through fiduciary education and to lead advocacy efforts on behalf of its membership. The organization recently celebrated its 20th anniversary. Annually, APAFS hosts a week-long educational conference in Manila. Notable keynote speakers have included, Fareed Zakaria (CNN host and commentator), Mark Mobius (former executive chairman of Templeton), and Marc Faber (author and Swiss investor living in Thailand). ***(PR)***

Matson publishes new sustainability report



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Matson's new sustainability report focuses on three areas that the company considers most important: environmental stewardship; caring for its employees and communities; and operating its business ethically, safely, and reliably.

HONOLULU, Hawaii—Matson, Inc. (NYSE: MATX), a leading U.S. carrier in the Pacific, has published a new sustainability report that describes the company's commitment to responsible environmental, social and governance practices.

"Over more than a century, Matson's business has been built on earning the trust of the customers and communities we serve and conducting our business with integrity. This report highlights Matson's achievements and the measures we are taking to advance responsible, sustainable and ethical practices throughout our company," said Matt Cox, chairman and chief executive officer. "I am proud of the work Matson is doing and we remain committed to building on our rich history."

Matson's new report focuses on three areas that the company considers most important: environmental stewardship; caring for its employees and communities; and operating its business ethically, safely and reliably. The report provides detail on the company's strategic approach, measures its progress and celebrates its key achievements. The company intends to issue reports annually.

Some highlights of the inaugural report include:

Environment: Reduced CO2 emissions by 13% between 2017 and 2019 and finished building four state-of-the-art U.S.-built ships which have numerous environmental features to help reduce GHG emissions

Diversity: Encouraged professional development and committed to providing new scholarships and internships aimed at increasing diversity among individuals pursuing studies in transportation and logistics

» Publication details progress on environmental, social, governance goals

Safety/COVID-19: Pioneered internal COVID safety policies and protocols and shared best practices with the U.S. Coast Guard and other maritime leaders

"This is an exciting time for Matson," said Rachel Lee, vice president, sustainability and governance. "We are making progress toward achieving Matson's sustainability goals – from moving toward a low-carbon future; to promoting a diverse workforce and an equitable and inclusive culture; and continuing to protect our employees in the face of an unprecedented pandemic."

More information on Matson's sustainability activities, including a downloadable copy of its 2019-2020 Sustainability Report is available at: www.matson.com/sustainability.

Founded in 1882, Matson (NYSE: MATX) is a leading provider of ocean transportation and logistics services. Matson provides a vital lifeline to the domestic non-contiguous economies of Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam, and to other island economies in Micronesia. Matson also operates two premium, expedited services from China to Long Beach, California, provides service to Okinawa, Japan and various islands in the South Pacific, and operates an international export service from Dutch Harbor to Asia. The Company's fleet of owned and chartered vessels includes containerships, combination container and roll-on/roll-off ships and custom-designed barges. Matson Logistics, established in 1987, extends the geographic reach of Matson's transportation network throughout the continental U.S. Its integrated, asset-light logistics services include rail intermodal, highway brokerage, warehousing, freight consolidation, Asia supply chain services, and forwarding to Alaska. Additional information about the Company is available at www.matson.com. ***(PR)***

STOCK PORTFOLIO

LEADING INDICATORS

DOW	S&P	NASDAQ
31,535.51	3,901.82	13,588.83
1.95%	2.38%	3.01%
+603.14	+90.67	+396.48

EXCHANGE RATES

In U.S. dollar terms

Australian Dollar	1.2881	Hong Kong Dollar	7.7585	Russian Ruble	73.5485
British Pound	0.7200	Indian Rupee	73.0727	Singapore Dollar	1.3310
Canadian Dollar	1.2668	Japanese Yen	106.7960	South Korean Won	1101.41
Chinese Yuan	6.3775	Malaysian Ringgit	4.0198	Swiss Franc	0.9152
Euro	0.8314	New Zealand Dollar	1.3789	Taiwan Dollar	27.4814
		Philippine Peso	47.7003	Thailand Baht	30.3150

Nation

States easing virus restrictions despite experts' warnings

MISSION, Kan. (AP)—With the U.S. vaccination drive picking up speed and a third formula on the way, states eager to reopen for business are easing coronavirus restrictions despite warnings from health experts that the outbreak is far from over and that moving too quickly could prolong the misery.

Massachusetts on Monday made it much easier to grab dinner and a show. In Missouri, where individual communities get to make the rules, the two biggest metropolitan areas—St. Louis and Kansas City—are relaxing some measures. Iowa's governor recently lifted mask requirements and limits on the number of people allowed in bars and restaurants, while the town of Lawrence, home to the University of Kansas, now lets establishments stay open until midnight.

Mike Lee, who owns Trezo Mare Restaurant & Lounge in Kansas City, said he hopes increased vaccine access, combined with warmer weather, will improve business.

"I think that people are excited to put this past them and be able to start to get back to their ways of doing things," Lee said.

The push to reopen comes as COVID-19 vaccine shipments to the states are ramping up. Nearly 20% of the nation's adults—or over 50 million people—have received at least one dose of vaccine, and 10% have been fully inoculated 2 1/2 months into the campaign to snuff out the virus, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Janssen COVID-19 Vaccine
SUSPENSION FOR INTRAMUSCULAR INJECTION
For use under Emergency Use Authorization
10 Multi-dose Vials
Each vial contains 5 doses of 0.5 mL
No Preservative
Attention: After first use, hold at 2°C to 8°C (36°F to 46°F). Discard after 6 hours.
Do not freeze.
janssen

AP
Boxes of the Johnson and Johnson COVID-19 vaccine are shown at the McKesson Corporation in Shepherdsville, Ky., Monday, March 1, 2021.

Johnson & Johnson shipped out nearly 4 million doses of its newly authorized, one-shot COVID-19 vaccine Sunday night to be delivered to states for use starting on Tuesday. The company will deliver about 16 million more doses by the end of March and a total of 100 million by the end of June.

That adds to the supply being distributed by Pfizer and Moderna and should help the nation amass enough doses by midsummer to vaccinate all adults. The White House is encouraging Americans to take the first dose available to them, regardless of manufacturer.

In New York City, where limited indoor dining has resumed, officials said the J&J vaccine will help the city to inoculate millions more people by summer, including through door-to-door vaccinations of homebound senior citizens.

But the efforts come with strong warnings from health officials against reopening too quickly, as worrisome coronavirus variants spread.

On Monday, the head of the CDC, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, urgently warned state officials and ordinary Americans not to let down their guard, saying she is "really worried about reports that more states are rolling back the exact public health measures that we have recommended."

"I remain deeply concerned about a potential shift in the trajectory of the pandemic," she said. "We stand to completely lose the hard-earned ground that we have gained."

Cases and hospitalizations have plunged since the end of January, and deaths have also dropped sharply, but they are still running at dangerously high levels and have even risen slightly over the past several days.

"We cannot be resigned to 70,000 cases a day and 2,000 daily deaths," Walensky said.

Overall, the outbreak has killed more than a half-million Americans.

The vaccine already is contributing to a decrease in severe cases and deaths among older people, and is "quickly becoming a bigger contributor" nationally, Justin Lessler, an expert in infectious diseases at Johns Hopkins University, said in an email.

"I suspect we will see it overtake natural infection as the biggest driver of immunity late spring earliest, more likely midsummer," Lessler said.

Calls for Cuomo's resignation mount as 3rd accuser emerges

NEW YORK (AP)—Calls for New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's resignation intensified late Monday after a third woman accused him of offensive behavior, saying he'd touched her face and back and asked to kiss her moments after they met at a wedding reception.

Anna Ruch told The New York Times late Monday that she removed the Democratic governor's hand from her back, but he said she seemed "aggressive," promptly put his hands on her face and asked if he could kiss her.

"I was so confused and shocked and embarrassed," Ruch, now 33, told the Times, which published a photo of the encounter showing the governor's hands on her face. "I turned my head away and didn't have words in that moment."

An email seeking comment was sent to Ruch's photography business. Her social media accounts were private. An email was also sent to Cuomo's administration for comment.

The account from Ruch, who worked as a photographer at the White House during President Barack Obama's second term, made her the second woman to accuse Cuomo of touching her without permission, and fueled broader calls for Cuomo to step down, including from some in his own party.

"The pattern of sexual harassment and predatory behavior by Governor Cuomo is unacceptable, and I believe the women coming forward," New York City Councilman Antonio Reynoso tweeted in comments echoed elsewhere. "Governor Cuomo must resign."

The latest accusation follows sexual harassment allegations against the governor from two women who had worked for his administration, accounts that led New York's independently elected attorney general to say she was moving ahead with an investigation of his conduct.

Attorney General Letitia James received a letter Monday from Cuomo's office authorizing her to take charge of the probe after a weekend of wrangling over who should investigate.

The letter enables James, also a Democrat, to deputize an outside law firm to conduct an inquiry with full subpoena power. The findings will be disclosed in a public report, the letter said.

Cuomo has maintained he had never inappropriately touched or propositioned anyone.

The former aide, Charlotte Bennett, rejected Cuomo's attempted apology in which he excused his behavior as "playful," saying Monday that the governor has "refused to acknowledge or take responsibility for his predatory behavior."

Bennett, who alleges Cuomo quizzed her about her sex life and asked whether she would be open to a relationship with an older man, tweeted that "abusers — particularly those with tremendous amounts of power — are often repeat offenders who engage in manipulative tactics to diminish allegations, blame victims, deny wrongdoing and escape consequences."

After news of Ruch's account broke, Bennett tweeted to her: "His inappropriate and aggressive behavior cannot be justified or normalized. Thank you for your courage and strength."

Cuomo's support has plummeted amid dual crises. The harassment allegations come on the heels of accusations he covered up the true death toll of coronavirus on nursing home residents.

It's quite a tumble for Cuomo, who had been widely celebrated for his leadership during the pandemic, particularly the daily news conferences where he sought to inform and reassure the public with charts, graphs and a machismo he dubbed "New York tough."

Senate confirms Cardona as Biden's education secretary

The Senate voted Monday to confirm Miguel Cardona as education secretary, clearing his way to lead President Joe Biden's effort to reopen the nation's schools amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Cardona, 45, a former public school teacher who went on to become Connecticut's education chief, was approved on a 64-33 vote.

He takes charge of the Education Department amid mounting tension between Americans who believe students can safely return to the classroom now, and others who say the risks are still too great.

Although his position carries limited authority to force schools to reopen, Cardona will be asked to play a central role in achieving Biden's goal to have a majority of elementary schools open five days a week within his first 100 days. He will be tasked with guiding schools through the reopening process, and sharing best practices on how to teach during a pandemic.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention last month released a road map for getting students back into classrooms safely. The agency said masks, social distancing and other strategies should be used, but vaccination of teachers was not a prerequisite for reopening.

Cardona, who gained attention for his efforts to reopen schools in Connecticut, has vowed to make it his top priority to reopen schools. At his Senate confirmation hearing last month, he said there are "great examples throughout our country of schools that have been able to reopen safely."

The debate has become a political firestorm for Biden, who is caught between competing interests as he aims to get students into the classroom without provoking the powerful teachers unions that helped put him in the White House. He says his goal of returning students to the classroom is possible if Congress approves his relief plan, which includes $130 billion for the nation's schools.

Republicans have rebuked Biden for failing to reopen schools faster, while teachers unions opposed the administration's decision to continue with federally required standardized tests during the pandemic. ***(AP)***

Asia

AS COVID CASES RISE

India giving COVID-19 vaccines to more people

NEW DELHI (AP)—India is expanding its coronavirus vaccination drive beyond health care and front-line workers, offering the shots to older people and those with medical conditions that put them at risk. Among the first to receive a vaccine on Monday was Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

AP

A health worker administers COVISHIELD vaccine to a man at the Guwahati Medical College hospital in Gauhati, India, Monday, March 1, 2021.

Those now eligible include anyone older than 60, as well as those over 45 who have ailments such as heart disease or diabetes that make them vulnerable to serious COVID-19 illness. The shots will be given for free at government hospitals and will also be sold at over 10,000 private hospitals at a fixed price of 250 rupees, or $3.40, per shot.

But the rollout of one of the world's largest vaccination drives has been sluggish. Amid signs of hesitancy among the first groups offered the vaccine, Modi, who is 70, got a shot at New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Science. He received the vaccine produced by Indian vaccine maker Bharat Biotech—which has been met with particular skepticism. He appealed for all to get vaccinated, tweeting afterward, "together, let us make India COVID-19 free!"

The drive, which began in January in the country of 1.4 billion people, has recently taken on even more urgency, since new infections have begun to increase again after months of consistent decline, and scientists have detected worrisome variants of the virus that they fear could hasten infections or render vaccines or treatments less useful.

Scores of elderly people started lining up outside private hospitals on Monday morning. Sunita Kapoor was among them, waiting for a vaccine with her husband. She said that they had been staying at home and not meeting people for months to stay safe from the virus—and were looking forward to being able to socialize a bit more. "We are excited," said Kapoor, 63.

Many said that they had struggled with the online system for registering and then waited in line for hours before receiving the vaccine—problems that other countries have also experienced.

Dr. Giridhar R. Babu, who studies epidemics at the Public Health Foundation of India, said that long waits for the elderly were a concern since they could pick up infections, including COVID-19, at hospitals. "The unintended effect might be that they get COVID when they go to get the vaccine," he said.

Even though India is home to the world's largest vaccine makers and has one of the biggest immunization programs, things haven't gone according to plan. Of the 10 million health care workers that the government had initially wanted to immunize, only 6.6 million have gotten the first shot of the two-dose vaccines and 2.4 million have gotten both. Of its estimated 20 million front-line workers, such as police or sanitation workers, only 5.1 million have been vaccinated so far.

Moon: South Korea, Japan must look to future to improve ties

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korean President Moon Jae-in said Monday that his government is eager for talks with Japan to improve relations following years of bitter feuding over historical grievances, adding that those unresolved issues should not stand in the way of developing "future-oriented" ties.

"There have been times where issues of the past weren't separated from those of the future and became intermingled with each other. This has impeded forward-looking development," Moon said in a nationally televised speech commemorating the anniversary of a 1919 Korean uprising against Japanese colonial rule.

"The Korean government is always ready to sit down and have talks with the Japanese government," he said.

South Korea and Japan have been struggling to repair relations that sank to their lowest point in decades in 2019 following South Korean court rulings that ordered Japanese companies to pay reparations to Koreans who were forced to work in their factories during World War II. Those rulings led to further tensions over trade when Japan put export controls on chemicals vital to South Korea's semiconductor industry.

Another sticking point in relations is the issue of Korean women who were sexually enslaved by Japan's wartime military, with survivors denouncing the Japanese government for refusing to accept legal responsibility for their slavery.

Japan has insisted that all wartime compensation issues were settled under a 1965 treaty normalizing relations with South Korea and it has reacted angrily to South Korean court rulings saying otherwise. There is a risk for further deterioration of the relationship if South Korean courts eventually order the liquidation of local assets of Japanese companies that have refused to compensate forced laborers.

While Moon said Seoul will continue to support Korean victims of Japanese wartime atrocities, he stressed that the countries "must not let the past hold us back."

Moon said improved relations would also benefit the three-way cooperation between South Korea, Japan and the United States, which Washington sees as crucial to dealing with regional issues such as North Korea's nuclear arsenal and China's increasing economic and military might.

Moon expressed hope that this year's Olympics in Tokyo could provide a stage to renew international efforts to resolve the nuclear standoff with North Korea.

Seoul has placed much of the blame for bad relations with Tokyo on Japan's hawkish former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and has hoped that his resignation for health reasons last September could be a diplomatic turning point.

World

Colombia 1st in Americas to get vaccines from UN program

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP)—Colombia on Monday became the first country in the Americas to receive a shipment of coronavirus vaccines from the United Nations-backed COVAX initiative, a program meant to ensure that the world's most vulnerable people are inoculated but that has so far struggled to assist nations around the globe.

The arrival of 117,000 doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine to the South American country's capital, Bogota, came a few days after the anniversary of the first case of COVID-19 found in the region.

The Pan American Health Organization said it expects to increase vaccine access in the region through the COVAX effort each month, with plans to bring about 280 million vaccines to the Americas and the Caribbean by the end of the year.

But the initiative, formed to ensure fair access to vaccines by low- and middle-income countries, has been hampered by the severely limited global supply of doses and logistical problems. Although it aims to deliver 2 billion shots this year, it currently has legally binding agreements only for several hundred million shots.

The organization said in a news release Monday that 36 countries in the region will receive vaccines through the initiative. Of those, 26 will do so through their own funds while 10 will receive the vaccines for free.

"The arrival means that more health workers and high-risk populations can begin to be vaccinated," World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement. "The COVID-19 pandemic can only end if vaccination occurs in an equitable way, and I am truly delighted to see vaccine doses in South America and other regions begin to be rolled out this week through COVAX."

COVAX is only planning to provide enough vaccine for 20% to 30% of the people in poorer countries—a figure that will still leave those nations vulnerable to coronavirus outbreaks. Experts estimate that at least 70% of a population needs to be protected against COVID-19 to prevent future epidemics.

Colombia, the third largest country in Latin America by population, had already begun COVID-19 inoculations, receiving its first shipment of vaccines Feb. 15. The government has said it aims to vaccinate 35 million people this year, including hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants and refugees who are currently living in the country.

The country of 50 million people has recorded more than 2.25 million cases and over 59,700 deaths of COVID-19. Its government expects to get 20 million doses of vaccines through the COVAX initiative this year.

"Today marks a very important milestone, today COVAX makes its first delivery in the Western Hemisphere, and the first country to receive it is Colombia," President Iván Duque said during an event to announce the vaccine arrival. He added that the delivery makes clear "COVAX is active and works," and called on "all of us to accelerate the distribution of vaccines through COVAX in the Americas."

The Pan American Health Organization on Monday said all countries in the region are expected to receive initial doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccines starting this month if they meet all conditions. In addition, Peru, El Salvador and Bolivia will also receive Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines soon once administrative, legal and regulatory requirements are met.

Last week, Ghana was the first country in the world to receive vaccines through the COVAX initiative. The West African country received 600,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines.

UN chief: Appeal for Yemen raises 'disappointing' $1.7B

CAIRO (AP)—A United Nations appeal for aid to Yemen to alleviate the world's worst humanitarian disaster raised some $1.7 billion Monday—a result the U.N. chief called "disappointing."

At a virtual pledging conference co-hosted by Sweden and Switzerland, U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had appealed for $3.85 billion this year to address the impoverished Arab country's dire needs.

The amount raised, however, was less than what the U.N. received last year, and a billion dollars short of what was pledged in the 2019 conference, he said.

Guterres called for countries to "consider again what they can do to help stave off the worst famine the world has seen in decades."

From the outset, it was unlikely that donors would meet the U.N.'s goal given the coronavirus pandemic and its devastating consequences for economies around the globe. Corruption allegations in Yemen aid operations were also a factor.

Yemen's war started in 2014 when the Iran-backed rebel Houthis seized the capital, Sanaa, and much of the country's north. The Saudi-led, U.S.-backed coalition intervened months later to dislodge the rebels and restore the internationally recognized government.

The conflict has killed some 130,000 people, spawned the world's worst humanitarian disaster and reversed development gains by 20 years, according to the U.N. Development Program.

Half of Yemen's health facilities are shuttered or destroyed and 4 million Yemenis have been driven from their homes. The pandemic, cholera epidemics and severe malnutrition among children have led to thousands of additional deaths.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs warned that more than 16 million people in Yemen will go hungry this year, with some half a million already living in famine-like conditions.

Guterres called for a nationwide cease-fire and U.N.-led negotiations to end the war. "In the end, the only path to peace is through an immediate, nationwide cease-fire... There is no other solution," he said.

Jan Egeland, secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council, who is on a week-long visit to Yemen, also called the outcome of the conference "disappointing," warning that the lack of funding would cause massive cuts to Yemen aid.

"The shortfall in humanitarian aid will be measured in lives lost," he said.

Good Housekeeping

Three corned beef recipes to enjoy this St. Patrick's Day that aren't hash

By JEANMARIE BROWNSON
THE DAILY MEAL

TNS

Baked corned beef caramelized onions and carrots, prepared and styled by Shannon Kinsella, in her kitchen, Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2021.

For many of us, corned beef tastes delicious every day of the year. But its popularity soars on Saint Patrick's Day—Irish heritage optional.

Like green beer, this holiday food tradition is largely a phenomenon in the United States. In fact, today's corned beef is more Jewish than Irish. It's rare to encounter it in Ireland.

The British are credited for corning beef in the 17th century by curing fresh beef with salt for preservation. Shaylyn Esposito, writing in the Smithsonian Magazine (March 15, 2013) explains that the term "corned" comes from the size of the salt kernels used in the curing. For tax reasons, Irish salt was less expensive than British salt, so cattle was shipped to Ireland to be corned. Irish corned beef was exported to Europe and the Americas until the end of the 18th century when the demand declined as the North American colonies produced their own.

A million Irish people immigrated to this country during Ireland's Great Famine, frequently landing first in New York alongside Jewish immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe. Here, the Irish embraced beef ¾ especially corned beef. However, Esposito explains that "the corned beef the Irish immigrants ate was much different than that produced in Ireland 200 years prior. The Irish immigrants almost solely bought their meat from kosher butchers. And what we think of today as Irish corned beef is actually Jewish corned beef thrown into a pot with cabbage and potatoes."

Since brisket is a tough cut of beef, it is well suited to the salting and cooking that transforms it into tender, tasty corned beef. This all explains why today corned beef can be found in Irish-American households and Jewish delis alike.

Armed with these kernels of knowledge, it's time to get cooking. You can simmer corned beef roasts (sold in cry-o-vac packages in the meat case) with a little Irish stout and fresh orange slices in the oven. The whole house will smell delicious, hopefully providing a pleasant distraction when working in our home offices. At dinnertime, a peppery maple glaze will make the whole dish shine.

When time is short, you can channel a delicatessen and simply enjoy a warm corned beef sandwich, made from deli-sliced, fully cooked corned beef on rye bread with zesty horseradish-spiked mayonnaise.

And leftover corned beef tastes great tucked into creamy, cheesy pasta for a warming winter meal no matter where you live.

■■■

MAPLE-GLAZED CORNED BEEF WITH ORANGE AND STOUT

Total time: 4 hours
25 m (prepare time) + 3 1/2 hours (cook time)
6 to 8 servings

Notes: Look in the meat case for seasoned corned beef that's ready to cook. A whole corned beef brisket weighs 6 to 8 pounds. A 3-pound flat cut makes for easy slicing. You can prepare the recipe through step 2 in a slow-cooker set on low. Cooking time will be 6 to 8 hours; add the carrots after 4 hours.

Ingredients

For the corned beef:
1 flat cut, corned beef brisket (about 3 pounds)
2 medium-size sweet onions, cut into 8 wedges
2 ribs celery, roughly chopped
1 medium-size orange, ends trimmed, halved, thinly sliced
3 large cloves garlic, sliced
1 teaspoon black peppercorns
1/2 teaspoon whole cloves
2 bay leaves
1 cup stout beer
8 long skinny carrots (about 12 ounces) peeled, cut crosswise in half

For the Glaze:
1/4 cup pure maple syrup
1 tablespoon molasses, optional
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
Horseradish sauce, for serving

Directions

1. Heat oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit. Put corned beef, wedges from 2 medium-size onions, 2 chopped celery ribs, 1 thinly sliced orange, 3 cloves sliced garlic, 1 teaspoon black peppercorns, 1/2 teaspoon whole cloves and 2 bay leaves into a large (6-quart) Dutch oven. Add 1 cup stout beer and then cold water to cover everything by 1 inch. Heat to a gentle simmer over medium heat.

2. Place a piece of parchment paper over the top of the pot. Add the lid and carefully slide into the oven. Bake covered, stirring once or twice, for 2 hours.

3. Add carrots to pot; cover and continue baking until a fork inserted into meat releases easily, 1 to 1 1/2 more hours. Use a slotted spoon to scoop out and discard the orange slices. (Recipe can be prepared to this point and refrigerated in the liquid, covered, up to 2 days. Rewarm everything over medium-low heat on top of the stove.)

4. To make the glaze, mix 1/4 cup maple syrup, 1 tablespoon molasses (if using), 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard and 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper in a small saucepan. Heat to a simmer. Cook and stir until mixture reduces to a thick syrup consistency, about 1 minute. Remove from heat.

5. Heat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit on convection or 400 degrees Fahrenheit on conventional setting. Use tongs to transfer cooked corned beef to a foil-lined baking pan. Use a slotted spoon to transfer carrots and onion pieces around the meat in the baking pan. (You can strain the broth and save it for the base of a meaty soup.)

6. Drizzle the maple glaze over the meat and the vegetables. Bake, until bubbling hot, about 10 minutes. Transfer corned beef to a cutting board. Slice thinly, across the grain. Arrange on serving platter; pile the carrots and onions alongside the sliced meat. Pass the horseradish sauce.

■■■

CHEESY PASTA WITH CARAMELIZED ONIONS AND CORNED BEEF

Total time 45 m
25 m (prepare time) + 20 m (cook time)
6 servings

Notes: I prefer not to use pre-shredded cheese here because the added anti-caking ingredients interfere with a creamy melt. It's easy to shred chunks of cheese on the large holes of a four-sided grater. If desired, transfer the finished dish to a buttered baking dish and top with buttered bread crumbs; bake until crumbs are crisp and golden.

Ingredients

8 ounces (about 2 1/2 cups) mezzi rigatoni or fusilli pasta
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon butter or bacon fat
1/2 large sweet onion, very thinly sliced
1/3 cup flour
2 cups nonfat milk
1/2 cup half-and-half or heavy (whipping) cream
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon hot red pepper sauce, plus more for serving
1 cup (3 ounces) shredded white cheddar cheese
1 cup (3 ounces) shredded Gruyere or Swiss cheese
1 1/2 cups (4 to 5 ounces) small dice corned beef (or smoky ham)
Chopped parsley and green onions, for garnish

Directions

1. Have all ingredients ready and set near the cooking surface.

2. Heat a large pot of salted water to boil over high heat. Add 8 ounces pasta. Cook, stirring often, until al dente (nearly tender but not soft when tasted), 8 to 10 minutes. Scoop out 1 cup of the cooking liquid and reserve it. Drain the pasta well and let stand while you make the sauce.

3. While the pasta cooks, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil and 1 tablespoon butter or bacon fat in medium-size saucepan over medium heat. Add 1/2 large sweet onion, thinly slices; cook and stir until onion is golden brown, 5 to 8 minutes.

4. Sprinkle 1/3 cup flour over onions; cook and stir for 1 minute. Whisk in 2 cups nonfat milk and 1/2 cup half-and-half (or whipping cream) and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cook, whisking constantly until milk thickens, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and season with 1 teaspoon red pepper hot sauce.

5. When pasta is done, stir both cheeses into the hot white sauce. Add drained pasta and corned beef; mix gently. Taste for salt. Gently stir in enough of the reserved pasta cooking liquid to loosen up the mixture. Serve right away sprinkled with parsley and onions.

■■■

WARM CORNED BEEF SANDWICH WITH BLACK PEPPER MAYO

Total time 10 m
8 m (prepare time) + 1 m (cook time)
2 sandwiches

Notes: You can toast the rye bread if desired, but I like the texture of untoasted bread with warm corned beef.

Ingredients

3 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 teaspoon prepared horseradish
1/2 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
4 slices hearty rye bread
6 to 8 ounces very thinly sliced corned beef
Very thinly sliced red onion, well rinsed, optional

Directions

1. Mix 3 tablespoons mayonnaise, 1 teaspoon prepared horseradish and 1/2 teaspoon fresh black pepper in small bowl. Spread the mixture over one side of 4 rye bread slices.

2. Fold the 6 to 8 ounces corned beef slices in half and pile them onto a microwave-safe plate. Cover with plastic and microwave on high (100 percent power) just long enough to make the meat steamy hot, 45 to 60 seconds.

3. Arrange half of the corned beef on two slices of the bread. Top with a few red onion slices if desired. Top with a second bread slice. Serve while warm.

Life & Style

Churchill painting owned by Angelina Jolie sells for $11.5M

LONDON (AP)—A Moroccan landscape painted by Winston Churchill and owned by Angelina Jolie sold at auction on Monday for more than $11.5 million, smashing the previous record for a work by Britain's World War II leader.

"Tower of the Koutoubia Mosque" sold at Christie's in London for 8,285,000 pounds ($11,590,715). The pre-sale estimate was 1.5 million pounds to 2.5 million pounds, and the previous record price for a Churchill painting was just under 1.8 million pounds.

The image of the 12th-century mosque in Marrakech at sunset, with the Atlas Mountains in the background, is a piece of both political and Hollywood history.

The only painting that Britain's wartime prime minister completed during the 1939-45 conflict, it was completed after the January 1943 Casablanca Conference, where Churchill and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt planned the defeat of Nazi Germany.

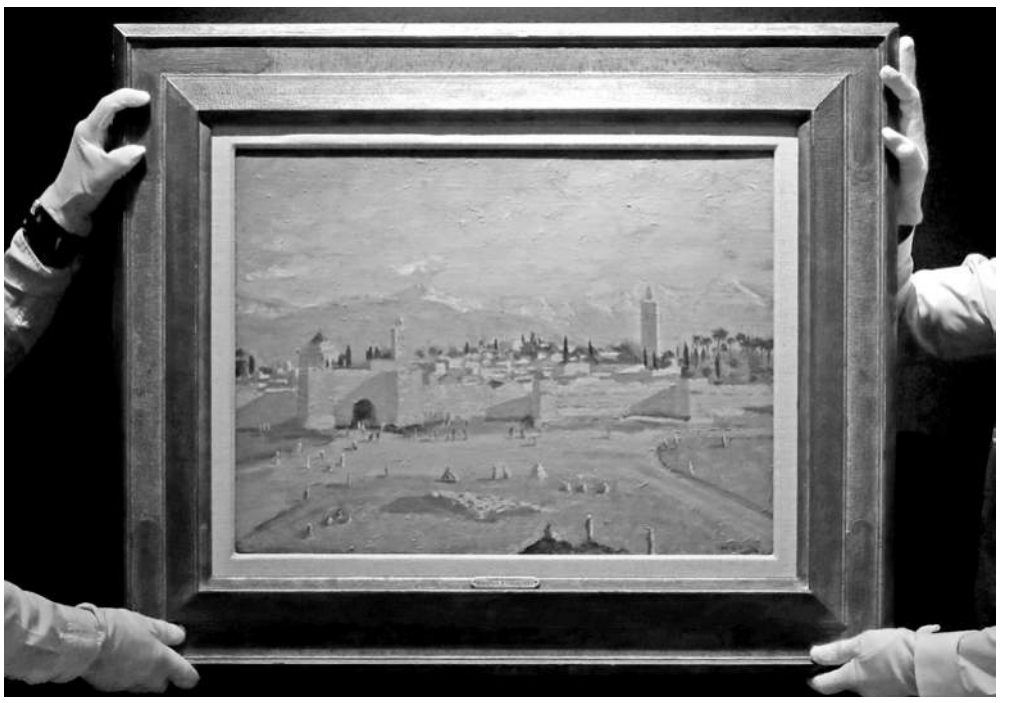
The two leaders visited Marrakech after the conference so that Churchill could show Roosevelt the city's beauty. Churchill gave the painting to Roosevelt as a memento of the trip.

The painting was sold by Roosevelt's son after the president's death in 1945, and had several owners before Jolie and partner Brad Pitt bought it in 2011.

The couple separated in 2016 and have spent years enmeshed in divorce proceedings, amid speculation about the division of their extensive art collection.

They were declared divorced in 2019 after their lawyers asked for a bifurcated judgment, meaning that two married people can be declared single while other issues, including finances and child custody, remain.

The painting was sold by the Jolie Family Collection. The buyer wasn't immediately identified.



(AP PHOTO/FRANK AUGSTEIN, FILE)

In this Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2021 file photo, Christie's employees adjust an oil on canvas painting by Sir Winston Churchill painted in Jan. 1943 called 'Tower of the Koutoubia Mosque' during an Art presale photo call at Christie's auction house in London. The Moroccan landscape painted by Winston Churchill and owned by Angelina Jolie sold at auction on Monday March 1, 2021, for more than $11.5 million, smashing the previous record for a work by Britain's World War II leader.

Prince Philip moved to specialized London heart hospital

LONDON (AP)—Prince Philip was transferred Monday to a specialized London heart hospital to undergo testing and observation for a pre-existing heart condition as he continues to be treated for an unspecified infection, Buckingham Palace said.

The 99-year-old husband of Queen Elizabeth II was moved from King Edward VII's Hospital, where he has been treated since Feb. 17, to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, which specializes in cardiac care.

The palace says Philip "remains comfortable and is responding to treatment but is expected to remain in hospital until at least the end of the week."

Philip was admitted to the private King Edward VII's Hospital in London after feeling ill. Philip's illness is not believed to be related to COVID-19. Both he and the queen, 94, received a first dose of a coronavirus vaccine in early January.

The Bart's Heart Centre is Europe's biggest specialized cardiovascular center, the National Health Service said. The center seeks to perform more heart surgery, MRI and CT scans than any other service in the world.

Jodie Foster fulfills promise to thank Packers QB at Globes

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Jodie Foster thanked Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers at the Golden Globes, fulfilling a promise the actress had made before she won.

Foster clarified Sunday night that she did not introduce Rodgers to actress Shailene Woodley, who recently confirmed her engagement to the NFL's MVP.

"I have never met Aaron Rodgers, but it is possible that I do like to talk about how much I love the Green Bay Packers," Foster said in virtual comments backstage. "Sometimes I can talk a little bit too much about that, so of course Shailene was very aware of my enthusiasm for the team."

Foster won for supporting actress in a motion picture for "The Mauritanian," in which she co-stars with Woodley.

"I just got a very cute video from Aaron Rodgers where he says he's going to get me back," Foster told reporters, "so I'm looking forward to this. We'll see who wins."

Lady Gaga's dog walker speaks out after Hollywood shooting

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Lady Gaga's dog walker, who was shot last week during a robbery in Hollywood when two of the singer's French bulldogs were stolen, described the violence and his recovery "from a very close call with death" in social media posts Monday.

Ryan Fischer's posts included pictures taken from his hospital bed, where he says "(a) lot of healing still needs to happen" but he looks forward to reuniting with the dogs.

Fischer was shot once as he walked three of Lady Gaga's dogs on Wednesday night on a street just off the famed Sunset Boulevard. Video captured by the doorbell camera of a nearby home captured Fischer's screams of "Oh my God! I've been shot!" and "Help me!" and "I'm bleeding out from my chest!"

Police are seeking two men in the attack and said Monday they are still investigating.

The two dogs, named Koji and Gustav, were returned unharmed Friday evening when a woman showed up at a Los Angeles police station with them. Detectives do not believe she was involved in the robbery or shooting and did not know if she would receive the $500,000 reward Lady Gaga had offered for the dogs' return. The singer is currently in Rome to film a movie.

Fischer thanked Lady Gaga for her support during the ordeal, writing "your babies are back and the family is whole ... we did it!" in Instagram posts. A third dog, named Asia, escaped the assailants and lies down next to Fischer "while a car sped away and blood poured from my gun shot (sic) wound," he wrote.

Two-year relationship seems to be off more often than on

DEAR ABBY: I have been on and off with a man for two years. In all this time, he has never spent a holiday or Valentine's Day with me, or introduced me to his family or friends. He told me to stay in the bathroom at his office when his friends showed up unexpectedly. When I objected, he said, "It's only for 20 minutes." I was horrified.

He accuses me of picking fights and says I will never be happy with anyone when I try to talk with him about it. He breaks up with me at holiday time, never calls when he's on vacation and our dates are always last minute. I realize he is using me for sex, but he insists I am wrong and he is a decent man.

Two birthdays passed, and he didn't even wish me a happy birthday, yet he buys presents and cards for every occasion for his friends and family. He blocks my number if I don't "behave properly." He calls me "Miss" in public, but calls waitresses "Sweetie" the few times we have gone out.

Narcissistic and emotionally abusive? Am I wrong? He tells me no one will stay with me once they know the type of woman I am. I'm not always at fault like he wants me to believe. He buys me nothing to drink or eat when we are together. I pay my own way. I regret the day he entered my life. How can I make him see what he does is wrong?

ALMOST DONE IN NEW YORK

DEAR ALMOST DONE: This shameless man may never view what he has been doing as wrong, so don't try to "make" him see anything. End this sorry excuse for a relationship now, because it is degrading, a waste of your time, and it's very likely that he is married and cheating on his wife.

DEAR ABBY: I am 62, very healthy and youthful, and work full time as an R.N. I recently started dating a 67-year-old man I met on a dating site. We go out, do various things together, laugh and seem to be compatible. My concern is, he has significant heart disease.

He has had stents put in and is on multiple meds. He also has moderate kidney failure. I'm realizing he's actually very preoccupied with the state of his health because he talks about it often, and he sees physicians as well as a naturopath and myofascial release specialist.

We were taking my dogs for a walk recently and he said he didn't feel well. He fell, and his defibrillator went off. Another time we were on a trip and he couldn't walk far before saying he needed water, and he also wanted to be sure there was a bathroom close by. Another time we were attempting to have some intimacy and his defibrillator went off, which put a damper on the mood.

Should I stay with this guy when his general health is so poor? It is affecting me—and us. I do not want to be a caretaker, although at the same time, I do have compassion for him.

HEARTSTRINGS PULLED

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR HEARTSTRINGS: What a sad situation. It shouldn't take a medical background to see what the future holds, at least for him.

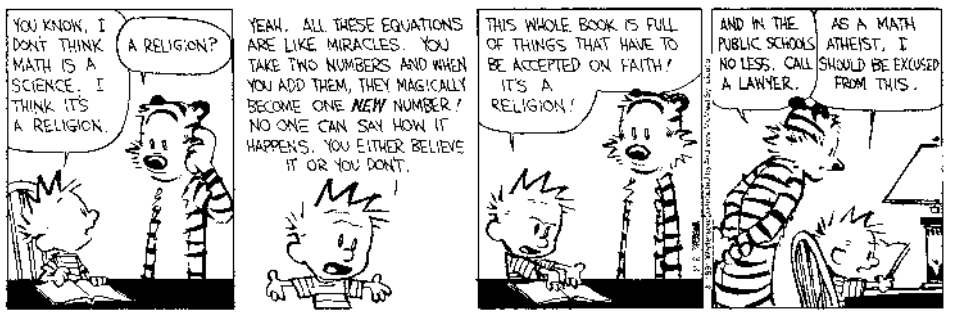
This is a new relationship. Not once in your letter did you mention the depth of his feelings for you or yours for him. He does—and probably will continue to—need looking after. Because you stated you are not prepared to do that, tell him NOW while he's well enough to find someone who would be.

Good advice for everyone – teens to seniors – is in "The Anger in All of Us and How to Deal With It." To order, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Anger Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


YOU KNOW, I DON'T THINK MATH IS A SCIENCE. I THINK IT'S A RELIGION.
A RELIGION?
YEAH. ALL THESE EQUATIONS ARE LIKE MIRACLES. YOU TAKE TWO NUMBERS AND WHEN YOU ADD THEM, THEY MAGICALLY BECOME ONE *NEW* NUMBER! NO ONE CAN SAY HOW IT HAPPENS. YOU EITHER BELIEVE IT OR YOU DON'T.
THIS WHOLE BOOK IS FULL OF THINGS THAT HAVE TO BE ACCEPTED ON FAITH! IT'S A RELIGION!
AND IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS NO LESS. CALL A LAWYER.
AS A MATH ATHEIST, I SHOULD BE EXCUSED FROM THIS.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

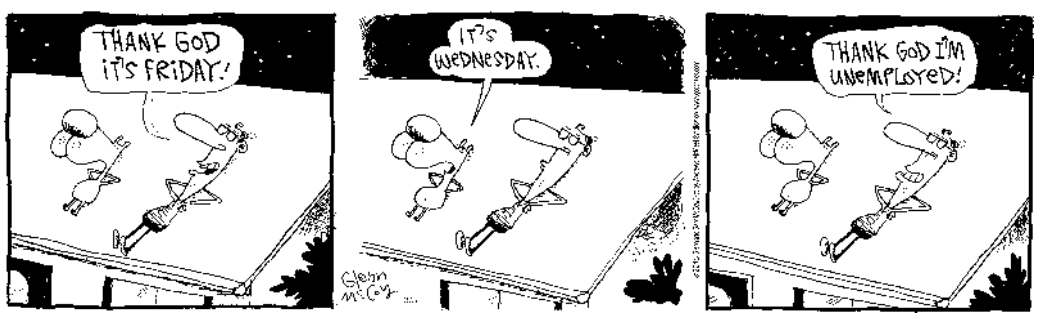
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

I WANT A SNOW DAY!!
I WANT SNOWSUITS AND SOGGY, ICE-COLD SOCKS!
I WANT THE TIPS OF MY EARS SO COLD THEY COULD BREAK OFF!
E-CLASSES GOING WELL?
SNOW DAYS ARE OUR BIRTHRIGHT!

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

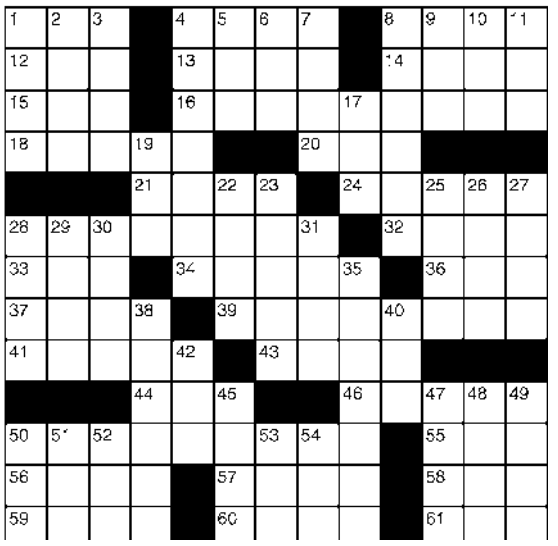
By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Chai, e.g.
4 Scheme
8 — Romeo
12 Crater edge
13 Swiss river
14 Autumn
15 Exist
16 World-wide
18 Streisand title role
20 Brit. record label
21 Sagacious
24 Petrify
28 Become a band of workers
32 Throat clearer
33 Irate
34 Cockeyed
36 Kimono sash
37 Get ready, briefly
39 Maker of Tiger Paw tires
41 Muffler
43 Fair-hiring org.
44 Apr. addressee
46 Sporty car roofs
50 Vehicles for circus clowns
55 Sheep call
56 Blaze
57 Sty cry
58 Work unit
59 Spanish cheers
60 Neat
61 "Of course"

DOWN
1 Meal carrier
2 Green land
3 "So be it"
4 Model Porizkova
5 PC linking system
6 "Entou-rage" role
7 Actress Campbell
8 Chad's continent
9 "Viva — Vegas"
10 Ga. neighbor
11 100% pure
17 Ambu-lance letters
19 Pair
22 In — (as found)
23 Online periodical
25 "Hey, sailor!"
26 Ms. McEntire
27 Actor Jannings
28 Diamond heads?
29 DEA agent
30 Notion
31 "Night" author Wiesel
35 Russian revolu-tionary
38 Costs
40 Hallow-een mo.
42 Saute
45 Kilt wearer
47 Follow orders
48 Rid of rind
49 Droops
50 Martian mover
51 Goose egg
52 Rage
53 Half of CIV
54 Conclu-sion

Solution time: 23 mins.

Yesterday's answer 3-3



STUMPED? For answers lo today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jessica Biel, 39; Julie Bowen, 51; Tone Loc, 55; Jackie Joyner-Kersee, 59.

Happy Birthday: Stand tall and stand up for your beliefs, but don't feel obligated to make financial contributions you cannot afford. Offer mental and physical help, and your effectiveness will pay off. Personal changes that you make will help alleviate stress. Concentrate on saving and building equity, not helping someone get ahead. Make romance a priority and kindness your calling card. Your numbers are 7, 13, 24, 26, 37, 41, 43.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Don't wait for things to come to you. Do your part to make things happen. You are responsible for your happiness, so reach out and make the necessary connections, adjustments and moves to turn your dream into a reality. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Focus on what you can accomplish. Join forces with someone who shares your concerns and your plan, and positive changes will occur. A meaningful relationship will improve if you share common interests. Romance is in the stars. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* It's up to you to figure out what's real and what's false. Problems with authority, institutions and your reputation will surface if you align yourself with the wrong people. Verify facts before you join a questionable movement. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Put greater emphasis on what you can accomplish. Don't waste time on people who cannot make up their minds or are reluctant to take action when change is required. Surround yourself with insightful, resourceful people. Romance is on the rise. ✪✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Take a step back; recognize what's unfolding around you. Get out of situations that are unstable or causing you grief. Protect your reputation and position. A partnership will lack the fundamentals necessary to promote a positive and healthy lifestyle. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* You've got more clout than you realize. Buckle up and prepare to take a journey that will change your life. Opportunity knocks, and being prepared to make a move will lead to a brighter future. Don't vacillate; take responsibility. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* Be open to suggestions, but don't buy into someone's dream. Stick to what you do best, and build momentum. A productive approach will help you achieve your goal. Keep things in perspective, even if someone plays with your emotions. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Stick close to home. Refuse to let outsiders interfere in your personal affairs or decisions. Fix up your place to suit your needs. A change will motivate you to strive for a healthier lifestyle. Romance will bring you closer to someone you love. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* Believe only information that's verified. Someone you least expect will lead you astray. Call on your intelligence, discipline and originality to help you overcome meddling.

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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Someone you least expect will disappoint you. Be honest with yourself and others. 3 stars

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19):* Pour your heart and soul into your work. Professional advancement, financial gain and positive change are within reach. Make home and personal improvements happen, and you'll experience better health and happiness. Romance will enhance a meaningful relationship. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18):* Gather and verify information. Refuse to let emotions come between you and making the right decision. Don't get involved in someone's dilemma, or you will end up taking on responsibilities that don't belong to you. Focus on self-improvement. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Be thorough regarding a joint venture, money exchange or investment that tempts you. A change will come with both good and bad results. Pick and choose what's worked for you in the past instead of jumping into something unfamiliar. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are unique, secretive and inspiring. You are insightful and changeable.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

		4	6					
		2		7				
9	7	1	3			4		
3							2	
8				4				9
5							8	
4	6	9	7			3		
			6		8			
			5	9				

Difficulty Level ★★★ 3/03

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

5	3	9	6	4	2	7	8	1
1	7	6	5	8	3	2	9	4
8	4	2	9	1	7	5	3	6
7	9	3	8	6	5	4	1	2
4	6	8	2	9	1	3	7	5
2	1	5	7	3	4	9	6	8
9	5	7	1	2	6	8	4	3
3	8	1	4	5	9	6	2	7
6	2	4	3	7	8	1	5	9

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

THE BAHAMAS — Solution: 6 letters

E	A	B	U	R	C	S	N	W	W	A	H	S	U	M
E	L	N	O	G	A	L	E	P	I	H	C	R	A	A
N	S	E	A	M	D	S	E	A	H	C	A	E	B	E
O	F	I	U	U	T	E	R	O	S	E	T	L	S	R
R	R	X	D	T	G	C	G	Ⓢ	Ⓨ	Ⓐ	Ⓒ	I	E	T
M	E	A	M	A	H	A	B	G	V	S	U	R	N	S
A	E	M	D	E	R	E	Y	I	A	R	T	A	H	N
N	P	L	R	H	U	A	R	A	C	R	E	E	A	O
S	O	S	N	A	I	P	P	A	M	C	R	B	R	R
G	R	M	I	N	F	A	T	H	O	L	U	E	B	I
G	T	S	A	N	S	A	L	V	A	D	O	R	O	N
R	C	G	G	A	D	N	A	R	G	B	T	R	U	I
E	U	A	E	V	R	E	S	E	R	N	A	Y	R	M
A	E	L	B	A	C	Y	A	C	O	C	O	C	Y	I
T	N	A	S	S	A	U	A	Y	A	C	U	L	O	B

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Abaco, Archers, Archipelago, Athol, Bahama, Beach, Berry, Bimini, Cable, Cays, CocoCay, Cruise, Eleuthera, Exumas, Farmer, Freeport, Gain, Gold, Grand, Great, Green, Harbour, Inagua, Iron, Long, Lucaya, Mayaguana, Musha, Nassau, Norman's, Ocean, Oyster, Paradise, Private, Ragged, Reserve, Rose, San Salvador, Savannah, Scrub, Stream, Tour, West, Whale

Yesterday's Answer: Beastmaster

Treasuries 22 through 43 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com.

Williamson pushes Pelicans past NBA-leading Jazz

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Zion Williamson showed no fear of renowned Jazz rim protector Rudy Gobert and spearheaded a relentless—and effective — assault on the Utah basket.

Williamson had 26 points, 10 rebounds and five assists, and the New Orleans Pelicans held off a late Utah comeback bid to beat the NBA-leading Jazz 129-124 on Monday night.

"My mindset was, whatever I can do to give my teammates energy, I'm going to do it," said Williamson, whose dominant third quarter gave New Orleans a double-digit lead heading into the fourth. "After the first two quarters of me kind of reading their defense, I really got a feel for it and I just was on the attack."

And the defenders he attacked included the 7-foot-1 Gobert, a two-time NBA defensive player of the year.

"Rudy Gobert is a phenomenal defender and phenomenal shot-blocker. So, it's not easy making shots over him," Williamson said. "Honestly, I looked to draw the foul initially, but somehow I finished those shots."

Brandon Ingram scored 26 points and Lonzo Ball added 23 points to go with eight assists, seven rebounds and two blocks, giving New Orleans three starters with 20-plus points.

"Any time we all pay like this, I definitely like our chances," Ball said.

Pelicans reserve JJ Redick scored 17 points, highlighted by a pair of four-point plays on 3-pointers as he was fouled.

Bojan Bogdanovic hit seven 3s and finished with a game-high 31 points for Utah (27-8), which was outscored 74-56 in the paint in losing for just the eighth time this season, but also the second time in three games.

"We've got to own the paint and we didn't do that in any way shape or form," said Utah guard Donovan Mitchell, who scored 21 points. "This is a tough loss. I think we're all pretty upset about this because it's stuff that we knew. It wasn't like we were tired. It wasn't like they did anything (unexpected). We just didn't have the urgency, and that can't happen."

Ball, however, said the Pelicans "knew we can get to the rim against pretty much anybody. It's one of our strengths."

New Orleans led by as many as 17 in the second half and was still up 14 when Ball's 3 made it 122-108 with 3:54 left.

AP

New Orleans Pelicans forward Zion Williamson (1) goes to the basket over Utah Jazz forward Georges Niang, left, and center Rudy Gobert, right, in the first half of an NBA basketball game in New Orleans, Monday, March 1, 2021.

Mavericks 130, Magic 124

In Orlando, Fla., Luka Doncic had 33 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists, Kristaps Porzingis played a nearly flawless second half and the Dallas Mavericks beat the Orlando Magic 130-124 on Monday night.

Jalen Brunson scored 17 of his 24 points in the second half as the Mavericks broke open a close game. Dallas has won four of its last five and nine of 12.

"We played great team basketball and that's always satisfying," said Doncic, who made 12 of 22 shots and five 3-pointers.

Nikola Vucevic had 29 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists for the Magic, who dropped their fourth straight.

Cavaliers 101, Rockets 90

In Houston, Collin Sexton scored 39 points and the Cleveland Cavaliers handed the hapless Houston Rockets their 12th straight loss with a 101-90 victory on Monday night.

The Cavaliers have won a season-high four straight after losing their previous 10 games.

"It gives our guys belief that they can," coach J.B. Bickerstaff said. "Our guys put in a lot of work (and) because of their continued belief in one another... that puts us in a position to get the wins we've gotten the past few games."

Cleveland had a 10-point lead in the fourth quarter before John Wall scored all of Houston's points in a 6-2 run that cut the deficit to 95-89 with 3 minutes left.

The Cavaliers scored the next four points with the help of a steal by Darius Garland to push the lead back to 10 a minute later.

This win belonged to the bench.

76ers 130, Pacers 114

In Philadelphia, Shake Milton shook off a defender with a crossover that sent the 76ers into a frenzy, and Furkan Korkmaz buried 3-pointers that sent them on their way toward a romp.

Milton scored 26 points, Korkmaz had 19 and the reserves sparked the Philadelphia 76ers to 130-114 win over the Indiana Pacers on Monday night.

"The ball was hopping," Milton said. "Everybody was getting a feel for it."

The Sixers followed one of their worst losses of the season to the struggling Cleveland Cavaliers on Saturday with a smackdown of the mediocre Pacers. Joel Embiid had 24 points and 13 rebounds on a sore left ankle. Ben Simmons had 18 points and six rebounds.

Nets 124, Spurs 113

In San Antoni, while Kevin Durant has to sit down, James Harden keeps stepping up.

Harden had 30 points, 15 assists and 14 rebounds and the Brooklyn Nets overcame a collapse in the final seconds of regulation to beat the Spurs 124-113 in overtime on Monday night, snapping a 17-game losing streak in San Antonio.

Harden had his seventh triple-double in 22 games with Brooklyn since being traded from Houston, where he plays again Wednesday.

"Honestly, I just try to find ways to impact the game and not just scoring the basketball," Harden said. "We have a number of guys that can put the ball in the basket. Just being a distributor of getting guys shots, getting guys easy buckets.

"I feel like it's my job. Just playing the game right way, not forcing anything, trying to make the right play, trying to get guys shots. That's kind of my mindset every single game and it's been working."

Despite recent injuries to Durant and Kyrie Irving, Brooklyn remains second in the Eastern Conference at 23-13.

Nuggets 118, Bulls 112

In Chicago, Nikola Jokic dominated with 39 points and 14 rebounds, and the Denver Nuggets beat the Chicago Bulls 118-112 on Monday night.

Jokic finished with nine assists, just missing his 50th career triple-double. The three-time All-Star came up huge in the fourth quarter, scoring 17 to help the Nuggets come away with the win after blowing a 15-point lead.

"That's the luxury of having an MVP candidate," coach Michael Malone said. "I see all these conversations about who would you want to start a franchise with. I've never seen Nikola's name mentioned, and I'm dumbfounded by that. My nominee — I've got a write-in nominee. Nikola Jokic is a guy I'd like to build a franchise with, like we've done here in Denver and had great success with."

Jamal Murray scored 24. Michael Porter Jr. added 17 points and 15 rebounds, and the Nuggets won for the third time in four games.

All-Star Zach LaVine led Chicago with 23 points and grabbed nine rebounds. Coby White added 20 points and 10 rebounds.

Trailblazers 123, Hornets 111

In Portland, Ore., after Portland's Carmelo Anthony scored 29 points against Charlotte, he exchanged jerseys with Hornets rookie LaMelo Ball, who had 30.

It was a bit of mutual Melo admiration.

Anthony had six of Portland's franchise-record 24 3-pointers and the Trail Blazers snapped a four-game losing streak with a 123-111 victory on Monday night.

"I try to embrace the next generation of guys and the young players," Anthony said of the jersey exchange. "It was fun playing against (Ball) tonight. I've been watching him since he was in high school. Just being across from him tonight, getting a chance to really see his game up close in person, getting to see him and what kind of person he is, so it was only right that we did that tonight."

At one point Ball hit a 3-pointer and did Anthony's signature 3-to-the-dome gesture.

"He can do it. He can only do it one time, but he can do it," Anthony laughed. "I blessed him, let him know that he can carry it on."

Ball said: "Pretty much it's just all love and respect both ways."

Hawks fire Lloyd Pierce as coach following disappointing start

ATLANTA (AP)—Atlanta Hawks coach Lloyd Pierce was fired on Monday, given the hook less than halfway into a season which carried heightened expectations before being hampered by injuries.

Hawks president Travis Schlenk announced the move in a short statement released by the team.

The Hawks are 14-20 and 11th in the Eastern Conference, following a 109-99 loss at Miami on Sunday night. It was the Hawks' 11th loss after holding a fourth-quarter lead. The teams play again in Miami on Tuesday.

Pierce, 44, gave no indication that he thought he was in trouble after Sunday's loss. He even ran the Hawks' practice on Monday morning in Miami.

"We would like to thank Lloyd for his work and commitment to not only the Hawks organization but the city of Atlanta," Schlenk said in the statement.

The Hawks did not immediately name an interim coach. The likely choice is Nate McMillan, the former Indiana coach who was added to Pierce's staff in the offseason.

McMillan filled in for Pierce when Piece was recently away from the team while his wife was giving birth.

Atlanta's was Pierce's first job as a head coach. He was previously an assistant with Philadelphia, Memphis, Golden State and Cleveland.

Schlenk said the move to fire Pierce, which comes less than a week before Atlanta hosts the All-Star Game, is timed to help the team have a second-half resurgence.

"We have high expectations for our team on the court and we believe by making this change now that we can have a strong second half of the season," Schlenk said.

The Hawks last appeared in the playoffs in 2017. The team has rebuilt around point guard Trae Young and forward John Collins and invested heavily in veterans in the offseason.

Key additions include Bogdan Bogdanovic, Danilo Gallinari, Rajon Rondo and Kris Dunn. The Hawks' talent also received a major upgrade with the addition of center Clint Capela.

The Hawks had free-agent money to spend, and Schlenk wasted no time in adding Gallinari (three years, $61.5 million), Rondo (two years, $15 million) and Dunn (two years, $10 million).

Dunn has yet to play, due to his ongoing recovery from ankle surgery. Bogdanovic has missed 25 games. Gallinari has missed nine games.

The biggest move came when Schlenk made Bogdanovic an offer — four years for $72 million — the Sacramento Kings didn't match.

Injuries to Bogdanovic and others have prevented Pierce from having a healthy roster, however.

Perhaps most disrupting to the Hawks' progress was the loss of emerging star De'Andre Hunter to knee surgery. Hunter, who had emerged as a scoring complement to Young and Collins, has missed 16 games.

The injuries were not enough to overcome management's disappointment with the slow start. This was supposed to be the season the Hawks' return to the playoffs, and Pierce acknowledged before the season it is time to win.

The start to this season followed Atlanta's 20-47 record last season which provided no proof of improvement. The Hawks finished in a virtual tie for last in the Eastern Conference, percentage points ahead of Cleveland.

The Hawks were one of eight teams excluded from the NBA's restart.

Royals make official Dozier deal for $25M, 4 years

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—The Royals made official their $25 million, four-year contract with third baseman Hunter Dozier on Monday, ensuring that another member of their young foundation is under club control for the foreseeable future.

Kansas City has gone through several down years after back-to-back World Series runs culminated with a championship in 2015. The small-market club was forced to watch players such as Eric Hosmer and Mike Moustakas depart for larger deals in other places, then begin the slow and often painful process of rebuilding from within.

Dozier, the eighth overall pick in the 2013 amateur draft, always figured into those plans.

He had a breakout season in 2019, when he hit 26 homers and led the American League with 10 triples while driving in 84 runs. And while his numbers regressed slightly last season, when he missed the start with COVID-19 and wound up hitting just .228 with six homers in 44 games, the Royals believe his best seasons are still to come.

"As I've said many times, it's our goal to keep as many of our talented players here together as long as we possibly can," Royals general manager Dayton Moore said. "Continuity and togetherness is crucial if we're going to win and have long-term success, but it takes players like Hunter as well, sacrificing some things as well in this process."

AP
Kansas City Royals' Hunter Dozier gets ready to bat during spring training baseball practice Monday, Feb. 22, 2021, in Surprise, Ariz.

All but four players expected to be major contributors to the Royals this season are under club control through 2022: left-hander Danny Duffy, outfielder Michael Taylor, catcher Salvador Perez and outfielder Jorge Soler. And in the case of Perez and Soler, they already have expressed interest in new deals for two of the power bats in their lineup.

As for the pitching staff? Most of them are 20-somethings that won't even sniff free agency for several more years.

"Like I've told all our players from the very beginning, we have no agenda," Moore said. "We understand they have a very small window of opportunity to reach their financial goals in this game. They've earned certain things and we want them to reap the rewards of the financial aspect of Major League Baseball. And we want that to happen in Kansas City."

Dozier's deal replaces a $2.72 million, one-year contract he agreed to on Dec. 2.

He gets a $1 million signing bonus and will earn $2.25 million this year, $4.5 million in 2022, $7.25 million in 2023 and $9 million in 2024. The Royals have a $10 million option for 2025 with a $1 million buyout.

Dozier's deal includes an escalator of $1.5 million for his 2024 salary if he reaches 1,575 plate appearances from 2021-23, and his option price would escalate by $1.5 million if he reaches 2,100 plate appearances from 2021-24—two important considerations given Dozier's history of injuries.

The 29-year-old Dozier made his big league debut in 2016, but he missed most of the following season with an oblique injury and a broken bone in his wrist. Dozier also missed time during the 2019 season with tightness in his side, and he has yet to play more than 139 games in a season.

Still, his defensive versatility — Dozier can play first base, third base and the outfielder — combined with his power, base-running ability and overall upside means he probably could have commanded more money on the open market.

"I think the biggest thing for me was security for my family," he said. "I'm a family guy and I always think of them first. That was a big thing for me and my wife and my kids. Trusting my agent, Joe (Gaza), listening to him, knowing if I could chose I would be a Royal for life — it was a very easy decision for me. I want to be here. I want to win here."

He knows "here" will be primarily third base in Kansas City next season.

The Royals signed former Indians slugger Carlos Santana to a $17.5 million, two-year deal as a free agent, then traded with the Red Sox and Mets to land outfielder Andrew Benintendi. Santana is expected to be the primary baseman and occasional designated hitter, and Benintendi will handle one of the corner outfield spots, freeing Dozier up to play third base.

"We've always looked at Hunter as a player that not only has the ability to play multiple positions but is willing to play multiple positions," Moore said. "In today's game it's really important to have that versatility and that winning mindset.

"Hunter is willing to do whatever is necessary to help the team win," Moore added. "We've known for a long period of time that Hunter's a foundational piece for our organization. He's a foundational player, person, and he represents all the things we desire in baseball players and people to represent our community."

In-game video returning to baseball for 2021

For Chris Owings' first seven years in the majors, he could pop into the video room to take a look at his at-bats during a game.

Then last season, the utility infielder for the Colorado Rockies had to make due with a printout.

"You'd come back in the dugout and you'd say, 'Hey where was that pitch at?'" Owings said Monday. "It would be like it is on the MLB app where it just shows where the pitch crossed the plate. You go from seeing every pitch where it crossed, where your swing was, to just being able to see where the pitch was on a piece of paper."

It was a jarring change for some hitters during a down year for offense during the pandemic-shortened season. But Major League Baseball has cleared the way for the return of in-game video on dugout iPads beginning on opening day, with catcher signals clipped when they are displayed on a computer.

Washington Nationals first baseman Ryan Zimmerman, who opted out of last season because of COVID-19 concerns, called video "a huge part of the game."

"A lot's been said about video rooms and how some people incorrectly used them. But I think we've kind of handled that situation," he said. "Having the delays with the live feeds and things like that allow you to basically squash all of that stuff.

"Hitters and pitchers, honestly, use video during the game, and it gives us the best chance to be successful and it gives us the best chance to, basically, put the best product on the field. Things like that, that help us perform better, should be able to be used."

For decades, baseball players retreated to a clubhouse video room to check out their at-bats or take a closer look at a reliever entering a game. Then Houston was penalized in January 2020 for an electronic sign-stealing scheme during the Astros' run to the 2017 World Series title and again in the 2018 season. The coronavirus pandemic also led baseball to limit clubhouse access.

The prohibition of in-game video access coincided with a .245 MLB batting average during the shortest regular season since 1878, the lowest since .237 in 1968 and down from .252 in 2019. The average number of home runs per game declined from the record set in 2019, and the difference between strikeouts and hits increased despite the short season.

"It definitely made it a little more difficult for hitters," Texas Rangers outfielder David Dahl said. "You can't go back and look at where was that pitch, how are they throwing me, what my timing looked like, little things like that that I checked out in the past."

Chicago White Sox manager Tony La Russa, hired in October, likes how players will be in the dugout with the iPads rather than going back to the video room.

"If you're always going in the clubhouse to watch your at-bat and then you come out after three outs, you lose a sense of the game," said La Russa, who last managed in the big leagues in 2011 with the Cardinals. "I think the fact that they would have it in the dugout is a step in the right direction."

How much in-game video helps depends on the hitter. For some, it's a major part of routine. Other players don't find it as helpful.

Chicago Cubs manager David Ross said he wasn't into video during his playing career, but he understands why some guys rely on the tool.

"When you can see that on video, of where they're trying to attack you, rather than the feedback that you get without seeing it, maybe you're like 'OK, maybe they're trying to attack me in and exploit a weakness in,' and you start kind of setting your eyes and your sights there," Ross said. ***(AP)***

Mets to honor Seaver with 41 patch on jerseys this season

NEW YORK (AP)—The New York Mets will honor the late Tom Seaver by wearing a "41" patch on their home and away jerseys this season.

The Mets announced Monday they'll pay tribute to the Hall of Fame pitcher by putting his number on the right sleeves of their uniforms.

Seaver died Aug. 31 at age 75.

The right-hander is the Mets career leader in wins, ERA and strikeouts. He earned three Cy Young Awards during his 12 seasons with New York and pitched the Mets to their first World Series championship in 1969.

Seaver also played for Cincinnati, the Chicago White Sox and Boston in a 20-year career. Overall, he had 311 wins, a 2.86 ERA and struck out 3,640.

The Mets retired his number in 1988 and he was inducted into the baseball Hall of Fame in 1992.

In 2019, the Mets changed the address of Citi Field to 41 Seaver Way. The team plans to unveil a Seaver statue at the ballpark this year.

Cardinals agree to terms with free agent edge rusher JJ Watt

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP)—J.J. Watt has agreed to a two-year contract with the Arizona Cardinals, showing that the franchise will be aggressive once again in their push to snap a five-year playoff drought.

The team announced the deal with the free-agent edge rusher on Monday. Watt was released last month by the Houston Texans, for whom he won three NFL Defensive Player of the Year awards.

A person familiar with the contract told The Associated Press that the total package is worth $31 million. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because the team did not reveal any terms.

A five-time All-Pro, Watt—who turns 32 in three weeks—has been one of the NFL's best players for a decade, but asked out in Houston, which is undergoing a roster upheaval. Watt joins another former Texans star, wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins, in Arizona. Hopkins was acquired by the Cardinals in a one-sided trade a year ago.

Watt had one year remaining on a six-year, $100 million contract with the Texans.

Watt's signing is an indication that the Cardinals are willing to spend money in their effort to return to the playoffs for the first time since 2015. They finished with an 8-8 record in 2020, losing five of their last seven games to fall just short of the postseason.

AP

Houston Texans defensive end J.J. Watt (99) celebrates during the second half of an NFL wild-card playoff football game against the Buffalo Bills in Houston, in this Saturday, Jan. 4, 2020, file photo.

Defensive coordinator Vance Joseph can now add Watt to a group that already has veteran edge rusher Chandler Jones, who had 19 sacks in 2019 before his 2020 season was cut short by a biceps injury. The Cardinals also have young playmakers such as linebacker Isaiah Simmons and Pro Bowl safety Budda Baker.

Hopkins foreshadowed Watt's arrival in the desert a few weeks ago on Instagram, when he posted a picture of the two players, including Watt in a photoshopped Cardinals jersey with the message "Let's finish what we started ... "

Watt's arrival will certainly ratchet up the pressure on third-year Cardinals coach Kliff Kingsbury, who wasn't quite able to push Arizona into the postseason in 2020. Kingsbury's known for his offensive acumen—and was brought to mentor 2019 No. 1 overall pick quarterback Kyler Murray—but now the defense might be just as important to the Cardinals' success.

Though he has been plagued by injuries in recent years, Watt started all 128 games in which he appeared in the past 10 years after entering the league as Houston's first-round selection, 11th overall, in the 2011 draft out of Wisconsin. In 2017, he was selected as the Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year for his work in helping Houston recover from Hurricane Harvey. Watt, who long has been lauded for his humanitarian efforts, helped raise more than $40 million in hurricane relief in 2017.

He was the league's top defensive player in 2012, 2014 and 2015. Then injuries began to slow him. He appeared in only three games in 2016 and five the next season, sidelined by back problems and then a broken leg. In 2019, Watt missed half of the schedule with a torn pectoral muscle.

He returned to play the entire 2020 season and was effective, though not dominant.

So the Cardinals likely are not getting a vintage Watt, the only player in NFL history with 20 or more sacks and 10 or more passes defended in a single season, doing it in both 2012 and 2014. He's tied for fifth among defensive lineman in league history with six touchdowns in the regular season, including three TD catches.

He has 101 career sacks, and over the past decade leads the league in tackles for losses (172), quarterback hits (281), multi-sack games (26) and sack yards (713 1-2).

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medal in the 2006 Microgames.

"It was then that we won our first gold medal for the Micro Games," he said

In 2011, the team won another gold medal during the Pacific Games held in New Caledonia.

"In the big games, the Pacific Games held in New Caledonia, we got our first gold for the event. Those are the biggest accomplishments I will always remember and I am very proud of them," he said.

CAMACHO

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Susulin placed third in the second round, taking second place in the first heat followed by fourth in the second.

Cherity Reyes, No. 3 in overall standings, took the lead in both heats of the second round gaining her 50 points.

Skylar Togawa, No. 2 in overall standings, placed last in the second round of the series. She completed the first heat at fourth place to earn 18 points. She completed the second heat in third place with 20 points. She currently has 82 points in the overall standings of the series.

JOSEPH CHIN

Ezekiel Camacho holds the top seed in the Peewee 1 division of the Marianas Racing Association 2021 Point Series Race.

As Tokyo nears, the plans for USA Basketball continue

MIAMI (AP)—Atlanta coach and USA Basketball men's national team assistant coach Lloyd Pierce had a one-day coronavirus scare a few weeks ago and had to stay in his hotel room while the matter was sorted out.

The bad news: He missed practice.

The good news: He didn't have to miss a USA Basketball staff call that head coach Gregg Popovich had scheduled for that day, because it would have conflicted with that practice.

"This is how smart Pop is," Pierce said.

If the rest of the plan comes together as well as that day did, USA Basketball will be very happy this summer. The start of the team's training camp in Las Vegas is now about four months away — July 1 is a target date, though not absolutely finalized — meaning the decisions on who will play for the Americans at the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics are getting closer and closer.

The Americans are expected to have about 60 players in the pool of Olympic prospects for this summer, then will pare that down significantly before bringing a team to Las Vegas. Assuming schedules do not change, that camp would begin during the NBA conference finals and with four teams still playing — meaning it's a safe bet that some players USA Basketball will want for Tokyo might otherwise be busy at that time.

That's why this Olympic selection process is going to have to be different than usual for the Americans, and multiple contingency plan must be mapped out.

Some of the questions that the USA Basketball coaches — Popovich's staff al includes Golden State coach Steve Kerr and Villanova's Jay Wright — and staff are currently mulling included these, as Pierce recalled Sunday in Miami before his Hawks faced the Heat:

"Who do you wait for? Who's worth waiting for? How long do you wait? How do you manage your roster because we're going to play four or five games in July in Vegas, kind of a mini-bubble of teams and just kind of keep everything there? And how do you manage a roster, knowing there may be some pretty important guys potentially that may still be playing. And then, what do you do in the event of some random emergency when you have to leave on the 19th for Tokyo?"

Most of the league's biggest American stars — LeBron James, Stephen Curry, Damian Lillard, James Harden, Jimmy Butler, Kyle Lowry, Kyrie Irving and Kevin Durant among them — were part of the player pool last year and are expected to be part of the pool this summer.

Pierce, Kerr and Wright were all with Popovich as assistants when USA Basketball finished seventh at the Basketball World Cup in 2019. More than 50 players were part of the U.S. plan at one point or another for "hat tournament; of those, 2 went to China, two got cut after the first week of training camp and the other three dozen or so opped out on their own.

"There's only so much to discuss," Kerr said. "We talked about roster possibilities and that sort of thing, and logistics. And the logistics are kind of up in the air, so we'll just play it by ear -- and when the time comes, we'll be ready to go to work."

Pierce said the U.S. is trying to simultaneously be preemptive and proactive when it comes to figuring out how this summer might work in terms of personnel.

"We haven't talked about style of play and things like that," Pierce said. "I think there's a lot of other factors that are really important right now leading into that."

The U.S. men will open the Olympics against France — the team that beat them in the World Cup quarterfinals and ended their medal hopes in that event — on July 25. The U.S. men will also face Iran on July 28 and a still-to-be-determined team on July 31.

The U.S. men are seeking a fourth consecutive gold medal. The Tokyo Games are scheduled to open July 23, one day after the NBA says is the last possible date for this season's NBA Finals.

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Camacho breaks tie for top seed

JOSEPH CHIN

The Peewee 2 division racers start the course with Jonoah Santos at the helm during the Marianas Racing Association 2021 Point Series Race last Sunday at the Cowtown Raceway Park.

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

Ezekiel Camacho broke the tie between himself and Zane Fujihara for the lead in the Peewee 1 Class of the Marianas Racing Association's 2021 Point Series Race last Sunday at Cowtown Raceway Park in Marpi.

Camacho soared to the top of the class after topping both heats in the second round of the series earning him 50 points. Fujihara, who vied for the top spot against Camacho in the first round, lost the lead after placing fourth and third in the first and second heat, respectively, earning him 38 points.

Camacho now holds the lead in the series event with an overall score of 97 points followed by Fujihara with 85 points. Kassidy Villagomez completed Top 3 in the standings with an overall score of 69.

Conan Iakopo, who gained zero points in the first round, redeemed himself in the second round of the series when he placed second in both heats to earn him 44 points.

In the Peewee 2 Class, Jonoah Santos remains the top seed after starting and finishing the round as the frontrunner to earn him 50 points.

Santos holds an overall score of 100 points. Santos is closely followed by Keenon Togawa who is holding on tight to the No. 2 spot of the series standings. Togawa currently has an overall score of 86 points after placing third and second in Round 2.

Calix Cruz still holds the third spot in the overall standings of the series with 42 points. Cruz placed second and third in the second round to earn him 42 points.

Brooklyn Susulin still holds the lead in overall standings in the Peewee RTV division with a total of 90 points. However,

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JOSEPH CHIN

Brooklyn Susulin holds the top seed in the Peewee ATV division of the Marianas Racing Association 2021 Point Series Race.

SBL to see new leadership

By KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
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REPORTER

The Saipan Baseball League will soon see a new set of leaders following the retirement of former director Tony Rogolofoi and former league president Rose Igitol.

In a brief telephone interview with Rogolofoi, he said that the board is working on nominating nine new individuals to serve as the league's board members.

"We will nominate nine new board members and they will get together soon to elect their officers like president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. They will run the program from now on," he said.

Rogolofoi said this nomination follows his and Igitol's decision to step down from their roles to give way for a new generation of leaders.

"We've been there for the longest time as board members and we wanted to give the opportunity to young and interested individuals to take the lead," he said.

Rogolofoi gave over 30 years of his life to making the Saipan Baseball League what it is today. Now, he feels it is time to give the seat up to someone else.

"We've done for the past 20 to 30 years and we think it's time to give the younger generation a chance to run the program," Rogolofoi said

Although Rogolofoi has stepped down, he said he will continue to advise the new members and coach the CNMI national baseball team every chance he gets.

Rogolofoi said he and his wife, Igitol, felt they wanted to retire in order to focus on their familial obligations.

"Rose and I have retired. We wanted to step back, relax, and take care of family matters. We have children off-island that we want to check up on.

Rogolofoi joined the Saipan Baseball League as a baseball player in the 1980s.

After 10 years, Rogolofoi served as a coach for the league while simultaneously working at the Francisco C. Ada Gymnasium. Finally, in 1995, he served as board member and later, director.

As a board member and a national coach for the team, Rogolofoi's leadership guided the team to two gold medals.

The team won their first gold

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Tony Rogolofoi, left, conducts a training session for CNMI youth players at Francisco Palacios Ballfield.